United Nations A/63/PV.8

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 24 September 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zelaya Rosales (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me to extend you the warmest and most heartfelt greeting of the people and the Government of Honduras. I would also extend this greeting to all nations and peoples represented here. I congratulate you, Sir, a distinguished representative of the Republic of Nicaragua who today is leading the Assembly. Your prestige as a man of peace and harmony and as a builder of dreams and utopias has been recognized throughout the world through the numerous prizes you have received, which honour the peoples of Central America.

Honduras currently holds the presidency pro tempore of the Central American Integration System, and I would like to recognize the work of the United Nations and to use this opportunity also to recognize the determination of the Central American Presidents to bring about a process of Central American integration. As was recognized by the European Commission, the region of the world that is unifying the most and becoming the most integrated is Central America — after Europe, of course. That is part of an important process, because we are addressing on areas and sectors that are important for our society.

Francisco Morazán was a martyr who gave his life for the cause of Central American union and for liberal policies, opposing the enemies of independence and freedom. The peoples of Central America and of Honduras continue to fight for these causes. We continue to fight for unity as we seek to establish economic independence. In recent years, Honduras has achieved a sustainable growth rate of between 6 and 7 per cent, and we have been able to reduce poverty and have recognized the international and national importance of protecting the environment. Honduras has become a tourist destination in Central America, because of the beauty of its main Caribbean Bay Islands, such as Guanaja, Utila and Roatán.

However, today, all of those advances in our economy and in the fight against poverty are being put in jeopardy by the crisis and the international scale of the financial fraud that has been brought about by the big multinationals in the world. The serious events that today have dragged us into a food and energy crisis with high fuel prices, and the collapse of the financial systems, particularly here in the United States of

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America, have shown that what I and others Presidents are saying today are historic and irrefutable truths.

For example, in our countries, particularly in Honduras, poverty and inequality are continuing to grow more marked in our societies. The State continues to become weaker through privatizations and capital is concentrated in a few firms and a few hands, lessening capacity to produce and generate development for our people. In recent years, the unequal distribution of wealth and income has become ever more entrenched. In Honduras, less than 1 per cent of the population possesses 70 per cent of the national wealth. Barely 10 families with links to international capital control the main economic activities of the country, naturally impoverishing the rest of the population.

Over the last two centuries, our peoples and our region have resisted with heroism, dignity and stoicism the onslaught of the cruel system that governs us. Pope John Paul II himself came to call that capitalistic system savage, an immoral mercantile system that exploits men and women and turns them into mere commodities and numbers. The merciless and demonic laws of the invincible market only satisfy the wealth and power of the few, to the detriment of the great majority of our societies. They believe themselves infallible gods. They are like a sinister Proteus that plays cat and mouse with people. They act like Saturn, the Greek god who devoured his children out of fear that they would dethrone him. However, today, with that logic of the law of the market, his sons are devouring their creator in the very cradle of capitalism, in the great centre of Wall Street or the other hubs of speculative capital in the world.

To give an example, the international trafficking of drugs, arms and people are other scourges that prevent us developing peoples from achieving the economic freedom and independence to which our nations aspire. The submission of our poor countries to the economic choices of international capital is brutal and surprising. We can say that capitalism is devouring human beings in most parts of the world, and paradoxically it is now also devouring the very creators of that system. Here I shall mention two particularly salient examples. In Honduras, over the last 20 years, many small coffee producers have succeeded in increasing their exports from $200 million to almost $600 million. That involved 20 years of hard work. However, in the last 12 months, in barely a year, with the doubling of the prices of energy, oil, food, wheat and the main staples that we consume, we are now losing what we achieved in that period of hard work.

Another example is what has happened here to the mandate of the United Nations. In 2000, this Organization agreed that poverty should be reduced by at least 50 per cent in 15 years, which we know is not coming about. The goal of reducing poverty and the contributions that the international community pledged to the developing world are not being translated into reality. In contrast, by way of giving an example, for each dollar that the international community contributes to cooperation, it allocates 10 dollars to the arms race.

Another quite fantastic example to give today is what is happening with the bankruptcy of the big investment banks. Now people are racing to provide funds to those big banks. Logically, if we were to provide them with what is being proposed today to save those banking institutions that have created that speculative capital — a sum of $700 billion — with just a third of that amount we could reduce and immediately put an end to poverty in Africa, Asia or Latin America. That system is the true present-day King Midas, who tried to convert everything into gold and profit for one particular sector. We shall never be free under that system, and we know that we must not accept that condition of neo-slavery and neocolonialism through which, by its domination, it bends us to its purposes.

The question for us all is can that difficult situation being experienced today, particularly by the less developed countries, be saved. The answer is yes, we can save ourselves from that crisis. We can respond. First, the State must act, the State must operate again in terms of social commitment. Capital must be used so that it serves to build a genuinely fair society. The aim should not be to destroy the market but simply to construct a social market economy. Capital should exist, but with limits. Defining the limits of capitalism is important to put an end to its primitive laws of the jungle. The aim is not to eliminate entrepreneurship and the free market, but to check and regulate the abuses and to humanize and sensitize those who are in the driving seat.

We must support a genuine democratic system, not only in international bodies but also internally within our countries. We must reform false democracy, which uses different political means to legitimize that

system of exploitation and injustice. It is a false democracy, in which men and women are seen merely as voters, as useful instruments employed only to distribute power, whose consciences are manipulated by the highest bidder in a political comedy in which those who possess wealth impose their mercantile irrationality on the larger group of those who are excluded from and marginalized by the system. We must reform that system, improve it and strengthen it so as to convert it into a genuine democracy. It is by the logic of political democracies that Governments are controlled and States manipulated, basic services are privatized and the whole of society is indoctrinated with an ideology of gain, egoism and individualism.

Imperialism as a system of domination of countries and of trade must disappear from the face of the Earth. The twenty-first century, and the peoples of the twenty-first century, should not have to pay for the excesses and brutality of the twentieth century.

We agree that property must exist, as it has a social function. Since the beginning of social organization in the world, property has always been granted within the framework of collective ownership. There must be the authority to intervene in speculative markets, as is happening now in the United States. Traders and their spokespeople do not have the right to direct society. The strategic areas of the economy must be at the service of the State and under its control to ensure that society never finds itself without food or medicine and that consumers are not robbed. Profits produced by work, wealth and capital should be better distributed in our societies among the real owners — workers, producers, capitalists, consumers and the State — in order to attain a common good.

The major transnational companies that produce medicines and chemical products should make available to developing countries the patents for technological discoveries that can improve living conditions for our citizens. This is a time for human solidarity.

We should end unfair competition in markets by eliminating subsidies in industrialized countries and removing tariff and non-tariff barriers. That would be a good message of the international community, a good intention at this time of crisis, for those peoples that were once their colonies, a message that we are no longer looked upon as mere game reserves but as brothers in humanity.

I am sure that the peoples of the world are able to come together to provide alternatives to a crude system that kills and destroys everything that does not adapt to its unmerciful laws.

Developed countries have a responsibility towards the peoples. Members know that very well. This afternoon we want to say, from this United Nations rostrum, that we are very grateful to the developed world, the industrialized world, for their cooperation with us at certain times. However, our peoples and our countries do not want donations. We have not come here to beg.

What we want is to be treated with equality and respect, and the right to opportunities and to participate. We do not want to be affected by the asymmetries in the economies and differences in developed countries. We do not want to have models imposed on us, models that only impoverish our nations. We do not want to be given lessons about how to manage our economies. We want to be given examples of solidarity and responsibility in the face of the major problems of nations, examples of how to distinguish between matters of importance to human beings and matters that are simply material. To developed countries we say that if they offer us aid, do not attach conditions to our acceptance of it. Do not insist that we accept a neoliberal model that is suffocating and exploiting our communities.

We cannot continue to measure development of countries by the profits of large companies. We must measure development by the access of young people to education and jobs, of children to food, of mothers to hospitals, of those who are ill to treatment, and of the undernourished to food.

We say to the countries of the Group of Eight (G8), with all due respect, that that very important organization should expand its membership to include countries that represent the five continents, to include countries of the Americas, such as Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia or Cuba, or, from other areas, India. The G8 should increase its capacity for dialogue with, for example, Central America or the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), where there are so many societies that could contribute with ideas, for ideas are sometimes worth more than money.

The countries that cooperate should respect national systems and not impose their own aid reception mechanisms on us. They should respect the

national priorities and systems that each country has developed in its programmes, the planning of Governments legitimately elected by the people.

Likewise, with all due respect to the European countries and to the United States of America, we wish to ask them to consider — as a gesture of goodwill and in light of the problems that we ourselves are suffering as a result of the financial imbalances that those countries caused — the rights of immigrants who are already on their territories. I would also like to recall that the peoples living in the lands of America and Europe were themselves once immigrants in those lands.

What does it cost to reunite migrant families and to begin to deal with their documentation, instead of deporting them? To immigrate is a human right, not a crime, and we should consider it in the context of respect for society. All of us want peace and harmony, and this is the best means of obtaining them.

The world is also concerned with the enlargement of the Security Council. Like other presidents who have spoken about this matter from this podium over the decades, we believe that there should be democratization at the very top of the United Nations, and the example should begin at home. That way we could discuss the real problems of humanity and find solutions.

We therefore need to establish a new pedagogy, a new way of education of our peoples, our children and future generations. We must cultivate, as is logical, genuine freedom for our nations, freedom of the press, freedom of movement, an honest freedom that gives the people the opportunity to know the truth about their problems without lies and manipulation.

The new manner of teaching that we are proposing to the General Assembly today could be promoted through the development programmes of the United Nations. We must begin to teach the value of solidarity among human beings, among countries and among the various organizations represented here. That teaching should demonstrate in a practical way that the centre of the world is not material possessions or money; the centre of the world should always be the human being — men and women, young people, children, the elderly, those beings with a soul and who are made in the image of the Creator of the universe.

In conclusion, I wish to take a moment to read a poem entitled, "Gold", by the Honduran poet and writer Alfonso Guillén Zelaya, who described well through poetry the events we have addressed in the Assembly.

> "Gold killed in men the native communion;
> It divided the Earth and corrupted affection.
> Before that, hunger did not exist.
> Fruit grew in all places freely before this,
> Waters, hunting, the plains were free.
> As there were no owners, there were never thieves.
> Life was one of peace, of love and of gentleness.
> People were good, like blessings.
> But, Lord of the gifts,
> Your gifts are gone.
> We are now condemned to live without fortune,
> Everything that we have made,
> Our own clothing, with the gold of the stars and the silver of the moon."

This is the Christian moral; it is the moral of the message today, tomorrow and forever, that we must accept the fact that this world is extremely materialistic and not very spiritual. It was the message offered when a tycoon approached the Master of Galilee and asked, Lord, how do I save myself? He replied: leave your possessions and follow me.

I would like to end with those thoughts on liberty, which is what our societies most need today. Let us ensure that the liberty advocated by our forefathers — Marti, Bolívar and Morazán — transforms the destiny of globalization so that we convert it into a globalization of solidarity, of justice and of harmony among the peoples. We must regain trust in the collective so that we can return to trusting in reason and say to the minority that they cannot be the reason for the State simply because of what they own. That alienating argument is unsustainable for the peoples of the world.

I fervently appeal this afternoon for us to secure votes for the freedom and peace of all peoples and nations of the Earth, for the principles expressed and ratified today in the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, because I firmly believe that a new world, another world, a better world is still possible. We have united to defend important matters of other countries. We have united to defend the positions of President Evo Morales in Bolivia so that a real social democracy can be established, as he has advocated. Based on those

principles, we have signed the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas — ALBA — and, based on those principles, we hope that the international community will also provide the international solidarity needed by Taiwan, which is asking for that solidarity.

We ask that God's blessing for you all and for your families and your nations become a reality today, tomorrow and forevermore.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guebuza (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Mr. President, we would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you upon your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. We are confident that under your wise and diligent leadership, our deliberations will be successful. We take this opportunity to assure you of our full collaboration and wish you success in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

We wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Srgjan Kerim of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for the pragmatism and dynamism of his endeavours in conducting the work of the sixty-second session. We also reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his engagement in the quest for peace, justice and solutions to the various challenges faced by humanity.

We have witnessed an increasing number of new and complex challenges. Among them, the food crisis is one of my country's main concerns owing to its direct, immediate impact on the lives of our peoples. The origin of this crisis may be linked to factors such as climate change and the subsequent irregular rainfall that affects agricultural productivity; desertification of vast areas and droughts around the world; increased demand for cereals; higher oil prices and the consequent impact on the price of transportation and other products such as agricultural raw materials; the impact of trade liberalization and agricultural subsidies in developed countries, which have led to a gradual decline in agricultural production in developing countries; and finally, the distortion of cereal prices across the globe.

Once the causes of the crisis have been identified, it becomes the responsibility of the international community to implement relevant and necessary solutions in a consistent and vigorous manner. Through that process, the crisis can be transformed into an opportunity to boost international partnerships and develop our countries.

In that context it is important to emphasize that international cooperation stimulates the revival of the productivity of farmers in developing countries, thus contributing to a speedy transformation of their current subsistence farming practices into commercial agriculture. Such cooperation includes improved access to improved seeds and to fertilizers and pesticides, investments in infrastructure for market accessibility and water management. Accordingly, we reiterate the need to implement the pertinent recommendations set forth at the Conference of the Least Developed Countries on the rules of the World Trade Organization and the food crisis.

Likewise, we call for support for regional efforts such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme in the framework of NEPAD, and the ongoing work by the Southern African Development Community, with a view to finding a collective response to mitigate the impact of the food crisis and to re-establish agriculture as the means to ensure food supply and better conditions and quality of life for the peoples of Southern Africa.

Mozambique is vulnerable to natural disasters and to the dynamics of the international prices of food and fuel products. Those factors represent a major threat to the implementation of the Government's socio-economic programmes. Despite the notable progress that we have been registering for our production of cassava and maize, we still import large quantities of other food products. Therefore, any cereal price fluctuation in the world immediately affects the day-to-day lives of our people.

Mozambique is endowed with natural resources which are favourable to mixed farming. However, the shortage of financial resources and the weak banking network in the rural zones, combined with the lack of infrastructure and technology to secure the development of commercial agriculture, have not allowed us to scale up our production to the levels that could meet the food needs of our population. The situation is worsened by poor distribution and marketing systems, making it difficult to distribute and market the products from certain surplus zones to the needy ones. Moreover, the cyclic natural disasters that have struck us have resulted in losses of significant plantation areas, causing the people of those areas to live permanently in need. Those calamities have also caused soil erosion and depletion and as a consequence food insecurity and malnutrition affect our people.

Mr. Choquehuanca Céspedes (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In order to address the food crisis, our Government approved last June, a Food Production Action Plan for the period 2008-2011. The programme was designed as a mechanism to implement the Green Revolution which we launched in 2007 and is goal-oriented. We are aware that implementing the Action Plan together with the Green Revolution will require additional resources, and we are therefore appealing for such additional resources for those programmes. We acknowledge the positive effect of the Green Revolution on the implementation of the MDGs, since no one can think about tomorrow or about education or about gender equality or the empowerment of women if they are hungry.

In February 2008, we launched the Presidential Initiative for women and children. At that time, several meetings were held with health professionals, religious and traditional leaders, women and youth. During those meetings, which are being replicated at the local level, it became clear that health issues permeate the MDGs. Although the advances that we have recorded are significant, they are not sufficient to have an impact on the reduction of avoidable deaths in Mozambique.

Our assessments show that we could, for instance, reduce maternal mortality by more than 50 per cent. We could achieve a decrease of 17 per cent in child mortality. We could significantly facilitate access to antiretroviral treatment and to treatment for tuberculosis and malaria. We could, by 2010 have more than 95 per cent of mothers and children sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets. However, in order to achieve those dreams, we are dependent upon an additional funding of $4 per capita a year for the health sector, from now until 2010. Additionally, we need $10 million more for mosquito nets. The $590 million needed to fill the deficit during the next seven years could help us train and employ around 20,000 additional health workers. That amount would raise the number of doctors by 119 per cent, the number of nurses and of mothers with access to health care would rise by 68 per cent.

Our dream is to prevent more avoidable deaths. As we have indicated, we cannot realize that dream by ourselves. We need the predictable, substantial and long-term support of our partners to meet the needs that I have just identified. We need an efficient health-care system and coordinated support from our international partners, which is a noble way to ensure the achievement of MDG 8, which focuses on developing a global partnership for development.

We therefore wish to take this opportunity to commend and encourage the perseverance of the international solidarity movement in helping Africa, and Mozambique in particular, in the context of women's and children's health with a view to fulfilling all the commitments made at the Millennium Summit. In numerous parts of the world, funds have been solicited and initiatives undertaken in support of our programmes. That interaction with our partners has led to the building of the necessary consensus on priorities and strategies to ensure sustainable development.

The world is changing and, along with all those changes, new global challenges have arisen. The United Nations is a universal institution with the legitimacy and the mandate to debate strategies and find solutions to such major challenges. Nevertheless, structural reforms are needed in order to improve the

Organization's ability to overcome the current challenges. In that regard, the reform process should be pursued so that the United Nations can achieve greater unity and improve its ability to provide appropriate responses to the challenges ahead, which will require us to strengthen multilateralism and promote partnerships for peace, security and development across the world.

In conclusion, we reiterate the importance of international cooperation to secure the production of sufficient and affordable food for all and to build a viable consensus for United Nations reform.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: Allow me to begin by congratulating Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann upon his assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly. I wish him success in his responsibilities and endeavours. I also wish to express my appreciation and respect to his predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his effective leadership during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

I shall be brief. I would like to speak today about the following three issues: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the prospects for realizing them; natural disasters and humanitarian assistance; and the war between Georgia and Russia, along with some of the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

Let me begin with the Millennium Development Goals. We must bear in mind that over half of the time originally allotted for achieving the Goals is already behind us. Yet, have we actually reached half our goals? As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reported here 20 days ago, there are reasons to doubt that we have. Some achievements can be regarded as noteworthy progress, for example greater access to education, a marked reduction in infant mortality, debt relief for developing countries, an increase in access to information and communication technology for people in developing countries, and so on. We have also made certain progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

At the same time, however, progress in the spheres of trade and development cooperation has been modest. From the Secretary-General's report, it is clear that, although the donor States have increased their official development aid, the actual flow of financial assistance in the course of the past two years has actually decreased.

The European Union, of which Estonia is a member, is on the whole, on track towards increasing its development aid to 0.7 per cent of its gross national income, the objective agreed at the United Nations. Estonia has steadily increased its share among international donors; our development aid has grown fourfold since 2004.

In addition to the actual decrease in development aid, we suffered a serious setback when the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations stalled and where the main theme has been a more efficient integration of developing countries into a world trading system based upon equality and regulations.

I would now like to set forth several positions based upon matters of principle that Estonia regards as essential, and which are also part of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

First, every nation is primarily responsible for its own development. In order to ensure their proper development, developing countries must strengthen their administrative infrastructure and capacity, intensify their fight against corruption and put their economic environment in order. That is the only way to create conditions suitable for an efficient mode of

transferring development aid and for increasing the benefits of the aid received.

High levels of corruption, inefficient administrative capacity and an unresponsive economic climate make it difficult for donor-nation public opinion to support increases in development aid. In a word, our electorates — and here I am of course speaking of democratic countries with free and fair elections — do not understand why their taxes are spent that way.

Secondly, donor States and organizations can enhance the effectiveness of development cooperation by mutually coordinating and standardizing the procedures involved in development cooperation.

Finally, I would like to stress that Estonia strongly supports British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's initiative, the Millennium Development Goals Call to Action. The objective is to inform the general public of the importance of fulfilling the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals programme. This year, Estonia also joined that initiative. I personally hope that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was right when he said that the MDGs are still achievable if we act now.

The second Wednesday of October is the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. In that connection, as opposed to the fight against poverty or diseases, we cannot of course set objectives for ourselves that can be expressed in monetary amounts. We can, however, formulate and implement measures that can help to minimize the dangers and threats to people and their property, and to avoid or reduce destruction to physical infrastructure and the environment. We can thereby limit losses and alleviate the suffering of people. That, in turn, can prevent the social and economic convulsions that natural catastrophes have on repeated occasions triggered throughout history.

In the case of humanitarian catastrophes, be they natural or man-made disasters, it is of the utmost importance that help arrive on the scene as quickly as possible and that the access of humanitarian experts be ensured, regardless of their nationality or the State or organization that they represent. Unfortunately, there have recently been a number of occasions when various countries have permitted help from abroad only under very specific conditions. As a result of such policies, it is the weakest and the most vulnerable who suffer the most.

As I said earlier, I would like to talk about recent and ongoing events in the southern Caucasus, specifically the military conflict between Georgia and Russia. There are a series of complex issues involved, but here in the General Assembly I would like to raise one fundamental question: What do those events mean for us, the United Nations?

To begin with, we must realize that the principles governing relations between States have been seriously damaged. It is regrettable in the extreme that the basic principles of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter, such as the unacceptability of threatening the use of force or actual aggression against a nation's territorial integrity, were grossly and grotesquely violated. Those principles must be and must remain the bases for the activity of the United Nations and the Security Council. Therefore, we have the right to demand and ensure that the United Nations be capable of convincing one Member to withdraw its military forces from the territory of another sovereign Member State and to terminate its aggression.

The capacity of the United Nations to fulfil the expectations placed upon it cannot be dependent upon whether said Member nation chooses or not to act according to the good practices of international law. In the alternative case, the United Nations loses its reason for existence. We cannot allow international law to be followed selectively and only when convenient, for then it is no longer law.

Russia's behaviour in the weeks following the cessation of combat activity showed us that, unfortunately, even in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is possible to refuse to adhere to international treaties, to interpret them arbitrarily and to observe international laws only when it serves one's interest. A permanent member of the Security Council should be especially committed to fulfilling the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That forces us once more to conclude that, in the interests of the international community, it is imperative to improve the capacity of the United Nations to regulate and resolve conflicts. Looking at recent events, it has become quite clear how important it is to proceed with the reform of the Security Council.

The previous month's events in the southern Caucasus raised another issue. Even before the armed

conflict broke out, Georgia was the target of a cyberwar aimed at Government websites, as well as those of news agencies and banks. In the case of cyberattacks and cyberwarfare, it is becoming ever more difficult to determine and apprehend the perpetrators. As I stated last year from this very rostrum, cyberattacks are an international problem — indeed, a form of aggression — that no nation is able to deal with on its own. Cyberattacks can be launched against any nation on any continent, and from any continent.

Administering and policing the cyberworld to avoid criminal and hostile attacks requires extensive cooperation and the standardization of relevant international regulations. I call upon all United Nations Member nations to deal with the risks associated with cybersecurity with the utmost seriousness. Estonia, which has extensive experience dealing with and repulsing cyberattacks, is ready to contribute its expertise to thwarting that new form of criminal warfare.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I also take this opportunity to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for the wise leadership he provided to the General Assembly during the past year.

I wish to start by stressing that the global food crisis is a collective challenge to the United Nations. Throughout the world, more people are now unable to find enough food to feed themselves. There are increased cases of food riots that, in turn, lead to political instability. The food crisis has resulted from the failure of all nations to increase and sustain the production of staple food crops such as wheat, rice, maize, millet, potatoes and lentils, as well as of fish, meat and poultry.

As leaders in the United Nations, we were aware of the signs pointing towards the global food shortage, widespread famine and malnutrition, but we decided to ignore those signs. We the world leaders failed to acknowledge that the food crisis poses a new threat to the stability of the social framework and economic prosperity of all nations, especially small ones.

I submit to the Assembly that the global food crisis is beginning to erode and even negate the gains made in national and global economic growth and trade that were manifested in many developed and developing countries. If those negative trends are not addressed effectively, there will be growing conflict within and among nations as the scramble for food to feed the people intensifies. Several factors have contributed to the global food crisis, but I will mention only a few.

First, during the past two decades food production in many countries has been affected by persistent severe climate changes, such as cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons, floods, drought, rising sea levels and desertification. Those climate changes reduce productivity in agriculture and food security. The high dependence on rain-fed agriculture, especially in developing sub-Saharan countries, has also placed such countries at the mercy of the vagaries of nature. It is a matter of great concern that global responses to those problems have been in the form of world conferences, seminars and workshops on climate change, but that not much has been done by way of concrete global action.

Secondly, agriculture and food production have been given low priority by international development institutions in their allocation of resources and investment funds. That has been compounded by low national budgetary allocations to food production in

many countries, especially in Africa. The recent diversion of food crops towards the production of biofuels has also reduced the stock of food and created food insecurity in some countries. That is further aggravated by the preference of commercial farmers to grow cash crops rather than food crops, thereby creating deficits in food production.

Thirdly, there is general concern in Africa that multilateral and bilateral institutions continue to oppose subsidies to agriculture and food production, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and Latin America. That has been the case despite overwhelming evidence that smallholder farmers continue to find enormous difficulties in accessing agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers, improved seeds, insecticides and herbicides. Those institutions also know that farmers are unable to produce enough food to feed themselves without subsidies.

A matter of global concern is that food production in many developing countries has been adversely affected by environmental destruction and the degradation of agricultural lands caused by serious pollution through the deliberate dumping of toxic waste and hazardous materials in rivers, lakes, seas and other water sources, largely by industries from the North. That has deprived many farmers of land to produce more food. The dumping has spoiled coastal lands, destroyed tourism and brought misery to people who can depend on neither agriculture nor on fish in their waters in order to earn a living.

The problems I have enumerated pose a serious challenge to global food security. World leaders in the United Nations can no longer detach themselves from those serious issues. We should be part of the solution.

First, the Government of Malawi sees the attainment of global food security as a collective challenge. It must be premised on the ability to produce sufficient food and to move it from surplus areas anywhere in the world to food deficit areas. In order to alleviate the global food crisis, Malawi proposes that a compact should be reached by which countries that can produce sufficient food surpluses should be empowered to share with others in the world, wherever they may be, through a fair international trading system. That would ensure that all of humankind has enough food.

Secondly, Malawi proposes that the United Nations urge industrialized countries to make significant increases in resource allocation to agriculture, especially food production. Special attention should be given to improving infrastructure, machinery, equipment and capacity-building for farmers, especially smallholder farmers. The private sector in industrialized countries should be persuaded to increase investment in food production, paying special attention to the application of science and technology to agriculture, and in research on climate change and on measures to protect food-producing nations from the vagaries of climate.

Thirdly, Malawi believes that the global food crisis could be mitigated if the United Nations, the World Bank and other multilateral and donor agencies were seriously to consider granting subsidies for agriculture and food production as an integral part of their global development policy and aid packages to developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. It would also be useful if the international community were to acknowledge Africa's potential and capacity to contribute significantly to the solution to the global food shortage. To that end, the United Nations should fully support the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, which is chaired by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

More specifically, Malawi appeals to the Group of Eight countries to support us in creating a green belt around our lakes and along our rivers to irrigate land up to 20 kilometres from the shores. The Malawi Government plans to grow a lot of rice, wheat, maize, millet, cassava, potatoes, beans and lentils for local and international markets.

I wish to conclude by stating that Malawi is convinced that, in order to achieve global food security, the United Nations must persuade the rich industrialized countries to share research, science and technology in food production and processing with the poor countries. Furthermore, the industrialized countries should consider funding food research programmes and subsidizing agriculture in developing countries as part of attaining global food security.

The global food crisis is not beyond the capacity of the community of nations to resolve. The global policy to create a hunger-free world must be adopted here in the General Assembly. All nations big and small, rich and poor, must work together to eliminate the global food shortages, famines, hunger and

malnutrition. Together we can do it. God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Dimitris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Dimitris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Dimitris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Christofias: I wish first to extend sincere congratulations to Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and to express my appreciation for the work done by his predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/1) on the work of the Organization, and I welcome his comprehensive approach to threats and his focus on recently emerged challenges.

It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time as President of the Republic of Cyprus. Maintaining the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy and strengthening the relevance of the United Nations has been one of the cornerstones of the foreign policy of the Republic of Cyprus since it won its independence in 1960.

The United Nations is important to the international community and particularly important to Cyprus. It is an essential institution for our global survival and for the further development of humankind in a balanced and fair way in increasingly difficult conditions. Our peoples look to the United Nations as the best forum for addressing such global problems as poverty, climate change, rising energy and food prices, diseases, natural disasters, human rights abuses and many other pressing global problems. Either we do things together in a collective, coordinated way or the problems will persist and become even less manageable.

This week, two important issues are being given particular attention — the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the special needs of Africa. I applaud the focus being given to both, highlighting the imperative need for collective action by the international community. However, we must match our words with deeds.

Cyprus emerged from colonialism as an impoverished independent State in 1960. Despite the fact that Cyprus has suffered greatly, we have managed to improve our economy. Today, Cyprus is firmly committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and maintains an emphasis on Africa in its overseas development assistance projects. Our approach is to focus on a small number of countries, concentrating our efforts on infrastructural development in the health and education sectors. Cyprus is gradually intensifying its efforts by increasing the level of assistance to additional countries.

Small States have higher stakes in multilateral diplomacy and in a fair and functional system of collective security, based on the principles of sovereign equality and respect for territorial integrity.

There is no clearer example of that than Cyprus itself. From the earliest days of its independence, Cyprus was forced to appeal to the world community for support in defending and preserving its independence, its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. It became a victim of foreign interference, which sowed the seeds of domestic problems for the new State. Those difficulties were exploited in the service of strategic interests alien to our independence and our territorial integrity. The culmination was the military coup instigated by the military junta of Athens and the Turkish military invasion of July and August 1974.

However, Cyprus survived. The will of the international community for Cyprus to survive is found in the plethora of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions — most of them, regrettably, not implemented. However, the moral support and resolute

stance provided Cyprus with a sword and shield that have ensured that it has remained and will continue to remain an undivided independent country with a single sovereignty, single citizenship and single international personality.

In addition, the resolutions of the United Nations on Cyprus contain two other important elements. They provide for a process of negotiations in the form of a good offices mission of the Secretary-General and, very importantly, they define the legal and political framework on which the discussions for the federal architecture of the Cypriot State will be built. Both of those elements are crucial. I firmly believe that our success in the new effort that is now beginning will depend upon respecting those essential conditions.

The President returned to the Chair.

With regard to the process of the Secretary-General's good offices mission, it entails negotiations with the Cypriots themselves in which they are the principal players. They are the owners of the process. The Cypriots themselves must build the State they envision for their society. The role of the Secretary-General and of the international community is to assist and to support. We are grateful for that. Good offices are not arbitration; they are not mediation. Recent experience has shown that any attempt to impose — and even to import — non-Cypriot-inspired and improvised models will meet with rejection by the Cypriot people.

The relevant Security Council resolutions are also important for the new effort because they provide the legal political framework within which the effort must take place. That framework prescribes a bizonal and bicommunal federation with a single international personality, single indivisible sovereignty and single citizenship. The federal institutions will embody the principle of political equality as defined by the relevant Security Council resolutions, in terms not of numerical equality but of effective participation by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in all organs of the federal State.

It is important to remind ourselves that a bizonal and bicommunal federation has been the only mutually agreed basis since 1977. It was reaffirmed as recently as a few weeks ago. It represents a compromise, and indeed the only possible compromise, on which a political arrangement can be built. The relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the Constitution of Cyprus exclude partition, secession or union with any other country.

The kind of solution we agree to must take into account not only our history and international legality, but also the kind of society we are and the kind of society we want to bequeath to our children. In that society, all Cypriot children must be born free and equal. Human rights and the fair satisfaction of human needs must take precedence over strategic considerations dictated by political expedience.

A new intensive effort started on 3 September with the aim of overcoming the impasses of the past and achieving progress that will lead to the reunification of Cyprus under mutually agreed terms and the withdrawal of foreign troops after 34 years of division and foreign occupation. If that effort is to succeed, there is a need for political will on the part of Cypriots, as well as the positive engagement of other important players, which for historical reasons have been part of the problem and need to become part of the solution.

For my part, I want to assure the General Assembly from this rostrum that my political will to do what is necessary to solve the problem is firm and deep-rooted. My origins are in the Progressive Party of Working People of Cyprus and in the popular movement of the island, which prides itself on a long history of struggles, and indeed sacrifices, in defence of friendship, cooperation and peaceful coexistence between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. On the other hand, I am one of those Cypriots who was deeply and directly affected by the foreign military invasion of 1974, because I myself and my family are internally displaced persons — refugees in our own country. The role of Cypriots is to agree on what they want. We must try to achieve that with the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mehmet Ali Talat. I believe that we can achieve it.

But that is not enough to achieve a solution. Turkey should contribute to the process in a positive way. Turkey still maintains over 40,000 troops and tens of thousands of settlers in Cyprus and can, without a doubt, determine the outcome of the issues under discussion. We believe that the solution should benefit everybody and will benefit everybody. It would allow Cypriots — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike — to live together and work together in an independent, prosperous country within the family of

the European Union, without the presence of foreign armies and illegal colonists and under conditions of security and respect for their identity and their rights.

Our world faces many problems, which are becoming increasingly complex. It is our conviction that those problems can be solved and that new threats can be prevented only through effective multilateral collective action. Peace must prevail — a true peace based on respect for international law and not the right of might. A response to the problem of international terrorism will be effective only if our world becomes less unjust. If hunger and poverty are not tackled, if regional disputes are not resolved on the basis of international legitimacy, and if global wealth is not distributed more fairly, peace cannot grow strong roots.

The United Nations is an achievement of our fathers and a necessary tool for ensuring a more stable, fair and prosperous world. Ultimately, the United Nations is only as successful as we, the Member States, allow it to be. I wish our community of nations a successful sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Dimitris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Uribe Vélez (*spoke in Spanish*): Speaking once again before the General Assembly, I would like to congratulate you on your election, Mr. President, and to wish you every success.

Colombia continues to fight so that each and every citizen can trust that he or she will live, work, undertake projects, study and be happy in his or her homeland. That trust is sustained by democratic security, security for socially responsible investment and the construction of social cohesion.

Crimes against the safety of citizens continue to decrease, but we are not satisfied. So far this year, the number of crimes has fallen by 30 per cent in comparison to the same period last year. We have prioritized the protection of union leaders, teachers and journalists. Of the 11,204 homicides committed as of 10 September, 36 were of workers and teachers affiliated with trade unions or independent teachers. To date, not a single journalist has been murdered. The Government grants individual protection to 8,612 citizens, 1,462 of whom belong to trade unions.

Our determination to combat impunity is ongoing. Between 1991 and 2001, only two convictions were handed down. Thanks to efforts in recent years in terms of budgeting, the strengthening of the judicial system, the security policy and the tripartite agreement among workers, business leaders and the Government, sponsored by the International Labour Organization, 199 persons have been convicted for the murder of workers and 134 of them are in prison. Of the 123 sentences handed down, 85 have occurred in the past three years.

In the past, terrorist organizations penetrated the labour movement, resulting in the murder of workers. The dismantling of the paramilitaries has eliminated that source of suffering, but terrorist guerrillas persist in committing such crimes, as recently happened in the south of the country with the murder of a group of teachers by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC).

Recently, our tranquillity in the absence of terrorist attacks was shattered by a car bomb set off by FARC, which destroyed the palace of justice in the city of Cali and left several people dead and others injured, as well as many poor families with their small businesses and homes destroyed.

Of the approximately 60,000 terrorists that ravaged the country at the start of the Government's term of office, 48,000 have abandoned their criminal organizations and joined the reintegration programme, which is a great challenge for Colombia. As of

17 September this year, 2,436 guerrilla members — 2,147 of them from FARC — had been demobilized.

In a democracy of opinion such as ours, the sustainability of democratic security depends on its credibility, which in turn is based on effectiveness and transparency. That transparency is tantamount to the observance of the fundamental human rights we all enjoy. From that foundation comes our respect for liberties in the midst of the fight against terrorism and for openness, vigilance, criticism and debate at the national and international levels.

Furthermore, a formative, world-leading effort in human rights within our armed forces is crucial, as is the ongoing adjustment of operative protocols through such measures as that requiring soldiers to wait for the presence of a judicial delegate before moving the body of a member of a criminal organization killed in action. We are also resolved to investigate and assist in the investigation of any type of accusation and the modernization of military criminal legislation.

On 10 December, our country will voluntarily submit our human rights record to the Universal Periodic Review, a new mechanism created by the United Nations that is an additional contribution to the public discussion of our new road map on the matter. Our work with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the Organization of American States on the policy of truth, justice and redress for victims must, along with our historic memory, heal wounds and help to extinguish the flames of violence forever.

There are intangible results of democratic security. Citizens have greater faith in the State and turn to it for protection, overcoming the past indifference of some and the inclination of many to solve problems by their own means. Additionally, we have recovered the State monopoly on weapons and on official justice. Citizens have lost their fear of denouncing others, testifying and cooperating with the armed forces and the justice system. Victims are no longer fearful and today are coming forward to claim their rights.

One year ago, I looked out at this Assembly in the frustration of not having been able to rescue Ingrid Betancourt and those held in captivity with her. Today, thanks to the heroism, planning and bloodless effectiveness of our soldiers, Ingrid Betancourt is a symbol of freedom — the freedom to which we aspire as we liberate those who remain in captivity and put an end to such shameful crimes in our homeland.

Social cohesion validates security. Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set for 2015 is an urgent need for us as an essential part of building social cohesion. We are close to reaching the goal of no more than 3 per cent of children under the age of five being malnourished. We are determined to reach zero and are now beginning to provide early schooling to those children.

By 2010, we hope to have reached 100 per cent in basic education coverage. Towards the goal of averaging 10.6 years of education for the population between ages 15 and 24, we have already achieved an average of more than nine years. The number of students having to repeat a grade has decreased from 6.1 per cent to 3.3 per cent, towards a goal of 2.3 per cent.

Mortality rates for children under five years of age have fallen from 37 to 20 per 1,000 births, with a goal of 17. That same indicator for children younger than one year has decreased from 31 to 15.6, with a goal of 14. Vaccination coverage is almost at 95 per cent, the percentage defined in the MDGs for 2015. Our great challenge is to reduce the pronounced disparities between regions.

Despite the economy's problems, we are still fully determined to meet the social goals through such programmes as Families in Action, Bank of Opportunities and the Together Network, which focuses social tools on the poorest spheres. That is all supported by very ambitious goals in the areas of child nutrition, educational quality and coverage, vocational training, health insurance, connectivity and good management of social resources. With regard to the latter, our administrative reform, which has already been extended to 411 State entities, seeks to prevent the State from being discredited, eliminating bureaucratic wastefulness and achieving social efficiency.

The mortgage and financial crises are minor problems compared to the threats to the environment. Although Colombia produces 0.35 per cent of world greenhouse gas emissions, we are highly vulnerable to the ravages of climate change resulting from melting ice and floods. More than 51 per cent of our territory is preserved as rainforest and is a major net contributor of oxygen.

Some of our most important environmental programmes include the building of mass transportation systems in nine cities, with plans under way for 10 more; a network of 66,000 rural families working as forest rangers, who are paid by the State to maintain collective areas free from illicit crops and to supervise the recovery and conservation of forests under the oversight of the United Nations; the conservation of 257 protected natural areas; the implementation of aqueduct and basic sanitation projects in the country's 32 departments and the 1,102 municipalities; and the promotion of alternative energy sources such as wind power and biofuels.

There are three common objections to biofuels: the risk of destroying the rainforest, the elimination of areas for agricultural food production, and the small amount of energy generated compared to that used to produce it. Colombia has 578,000 square kilometres of rainforest and 43 million hectares of savannah. We will not allow the rainforest to be touched. Protecting it is our main contribution to combating global warming. With the available savannah, we can expand our agricultural production concentrated in 5 million hectares, increase the number of livestock to 24 million heads of cattle and, without affecting food production, develop a large biofuel industry that generates good quality jobs, increases income and becomes an alternative to coca, which fuels terrorism. Our productivity is high, thanks to sources of energy such as sugar cane and the African oil palm, which also protects the soil from direct sunlight and prevents erosion. For every energy unit used, 8 energy units of ethanol are produced, or 6.5 units in biodiesel.

Illicit drugs are a great enemy of the environment, and they fuel terrorism. Colombia still suffers from violence because of illicit drugs. We speak of shared responsibility not to assign exclusive responsibilities to consumer countries, for, unfortunately, our young people also use drugs. We speak of shared responsibility to spur the world to combat production, trafficking, consumption, asset laundering and chemical precursors on an equal basis. Our Government requests that consumption be punished in our country and across the international community. We have extradited more than 800 persons. This year, we must spray 130,000 hectares of coca crops, while another 100,000 must be manually eradicated. Over the past five years, 10,000 properties have been confiscated. However, there has been no significant reduction in illicit crop areas and consumption is on the rise.

Let us consider that situation. It is more difficult to carry out prevention and rehabilitation efforts against the backdrop of exponential growth in consumption resulting from a permissive attitude. The destruction of the rainforest to plant coca, the erosion of the soil and the pollution caused by chemical precursors are enormous affronts on the environmental balance. Whoever buys a personal dose of illicit drugs encourages a child to become a distributor and, later, a feared criminal. Whoever buys a personal dose of illicit drugs helps to set off a car bomb in Colombia and to destroy four trees from our Amazon rainforest.

Investors from all over the world are coming to Colombia every day. Twice as many tourists, from every corner of the world, are visiting our country as were five years ago. Many of those who looked on our country with scepticism and spoke about Colombia as a failed State can now discern clear signals of institutional strength and democratic boldness. Colombia today generates more trust and respect, but the work goes on. To free us all from the horrors of drug trafficking, terrorism and poverty, we need more resolute support from the international community. I would very much like to thank the United Nations for its very significant presence in our country.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Choquehuanca Céspedes (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zatlers: I wish to begin by congratulating Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann on assuming the post of President of the General Assembly at its current session.

Today I shall start by addressing the security situation in the world. During the past year, the international community has deepened its understanding of frozen conflicts. Frozen does not mean resolved; it means that those conflicts are able to re-emerge. Therefore, I am particularly glad that significant progress has been achieved towards resolving long-lasting conflicts in some regions.

First, I would like to mention Kosovo. Strong involvement by the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the United States helped to resolve a protracted conflict in the Balkans. Now we need to focus our efforts on the development of Kosovo's statehood: political stability, economic prosperity, security and good relations with its neighbours.

I welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to reconfigure the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. It is necessary to continue the constructive cooperation between the United Nations and the EU so that the Kosovo Mission can be fully deployed. That is important both for Kosovo and for the entire West Balkans region.

The international community has also made remarkable efforts to assist Afghanistan in building a democratic, prosperous and secure State. Large and small countries and civilian and military organizations from all over the world are working together to fulfil our common aspiration to peace and stability.

We must not undermine that immense effort by being impatient. The war ravaged Afghanistan for 20 years; it will take at least as much time to rebuild a peaceful society. The international community must push ahead until that long-term aim is achieved.

Latvia is increasing its commitment to the Afghan people in terms of development and security assistance. We are focusing our civil engagement on ensuring good governance and a strong judiciary and on meeting the basic needs of the Afghan people.

The prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East affect the whole world. Latvia hopes that the peace negotiations between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority will produce results. We hope that the parties will use the window of opportunity to conclude a peace agreement by the end of 2008. The indirect talks that have resumed between Israel and Syria are another positive signal.

Latvia welcomes the stabilization process in Lebanon. We hope that the Doha agreement will be fully implemented and that it will serve as a solid foundation for renewed political stability, national unity and sustainable economic development in the country.

Not all of the developments over the past year have been positive. We have witnessed new challenges to the law-based international system. We should ask ourselves whether we, as the international community, can accept the fact that peacekeeping troops protect only one side involved in a conflict. Can we accept the fact that peacekeeping forces are occupying territories that are clearly outside the conflict zones? Can we accept the fact that the protection of nationals abroad is being used as a pretext for a large-scale use of force in another State without the approval of the Security Council?

All those questions arise from the international response to the recent war in Georgia. If they matter to us, we should have a clear plan to resolve the Georgian crisis. The most important task is adherence to and implementation of the six-point ceasefire agreement on the part of the Russian Federation. First, foreign troops must be removed from all Georgian soil. Equally important is the establishment of an EU monitoring mission to normalize the situation in Georgia.

For 15 years now, the United Nations has mandated the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia. We must ensure that there are no obstacles to the continuation of that effort. I call upon world leaders to come together not only to provide humanitarian aid to Georgia, but also to ensure a massive international effort to help rebuild the country's economy and infrastructure.

It is about time that we seriously examine our development commitments. The time between now and 2015 may seem long, but it is less than the time that has elapsed since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. Two days ago, I

participated in the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs, and tomorrow I will participate in the high-level event on the MDGs. Those are important efforts aimed at giving the issue the top priority that it deserves. We must significantly accelerate the processes for achieving the MDGs by 2015. A clearer picture of what we must achieve in the interim in each of the main clusters of the MDGs — health, education, growth and climate change — is what the United Nations needs immediately.

We also need a clearer picture of the required division of labour among various actors, and we need to develop a shared sense of progress. A clear plan of action is what we need right now. Therefore, Latvia strongly supports the EU Call for Action initiative on the MDGs. Climate change will have a major negative bearing on the achievement of the MDGs. Latvia supports broader use of renewable energy resources to reduce carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. However, climate change cannot be seen as an exclusively environmental challenge; we need a more integrated approach.

Changes to energy consumption patterns must be taken into account as we move towards sustainable development, food security and worldwide trade. Innovative technologies, as well as sustainable production and consumption, would deliver both midterm and long-term results. Carbon dioxide emissions cannot be cut in some regions while others do nothing. While each of our countries must commit to cutting emissions, success will be possible only if there is a truly global agreement that enables us to do so and tells us how. The United Nations, as the only truly global Organization, must play a decisive role.

Trade liberalization is an important contributor to the achievement of the MDGs. Although the recent trade liberalization efforts at the World Trade Organization were not successful, the process must be continued at the multilateral level.

Globalization has brought with it both increased prosperity and increased risks. We need to find a way to ensure that tomorrow's globalization will offer growing prosperity to all people. Globalization will produce benefits on a truly global scale only if trade is liberalized across the board. Every country and every region must do its fair share in that process.

I would like to congratulate Ms. Navanethem Pillay, the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the assumption of her duties and to wish her every success in that highly important post. I would also like to thank Ms. Louise Arbour for her invaluable contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights.

This year, symbolically, the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights coincides with the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Latvia. In 1918, the Act of Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia declared:

> "All citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, are asked to help, for the rights of all people will be guaranteed in Latvia. It will be a democratic and just State where oppression and injustice do not exist".

I am truly proud of that statement. Thirty years before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Republic of Latvia declared its adherence to the same core values and principles and fully implemented them in the newly established State.

Unfortunately, by the time the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been adopted, Latvia had come under foreign occupation and its people had been deprived of their right to freely determine their political status and were being subjected to oppression and injustice. It was only in 1991 that Latvia restored its statehood and the continuity of its commitment to fundamental human rights, inherent human dignity, equality and the universality of those values.

The creation of the Human Rights Council and the beginning of the Universal Periodic Review are important steps aimed at promoting the values of the Universal Declaration. The special procedures of the Human Rights Council play a particular role in that regard. Latvia expresses its full support for them and urges all United Nations Members to cooperate fully with the special procedures, including by issuing standing invitations to them.

Latvia is ready to share with the international community its experience in the area of promoting human rights. Latvia has put forward its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the year 2014.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC). We welcome the progress the Court has achieved in its analyses, investigations and judicial proceedings. We call upon

all States to ensure full cooperation with the Court. The ICC is not an instrument that can be activated or deactivated according to political expediency. We are convinced that universality of justice is a prerequisite for sustainable peace.

Effective multilateralism requires combining greater awareness of the nature of the risks we face with a contemporary understanding of how international politics are forged today. International organizations are only one part of our global system, and often that part is the most resistant to change. It is regrettable that the enthusiasm and momentum generated during the 2005 World Summit in reforming this universal international body has somewhat faded.

Reform of the Security Council is long overdue. We must move on from the discussion of procedure into a discussion of substance. We welcome the recent decision by the General Assembly to continue immediately within the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council to prepare intergovernmental negotiations on the question of the Security Council's expansion.

While recognizing the need for structural reform of the United Nations, we should not lose sight of making more effective use of existing capacity. Management reform is central to all those efforts. We support further measures aimed at ensuring greater transparency, enhanced accountability and strict budget discipline. There has been some progress, but not enough by far.

We live in a world with deteriorating security, a growing population, the consequences of climate change and market turbulence aggravated by high energy and food prices. We need deeper engagement with the risks we face globally. That requires a new commitment to our values and a willingness to work for an international system that has a vision of the future at its heart. I would like that to become the driving force for all the work of the General Assembly at this sixty-third session.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for his statement.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Stephen: I offer my congratulations to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I can assure him that Nauru will lend its full cooperation to him as he leads our work during this time. Also, allow me to take this opportunity to commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his leadership of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

I wish to reaffirm Nauru's commitment and abiding faith in the ideals and objectives of the United Nations. We declare our support for the Organization's efforts to resolve the multiple humanitarian, peace and security and development challenges confronting our world today.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Assembly for the first time as President of the Republic of Nauru. I took the challenge of the office fully cognizant of my responsibilities to the people of Nauru. Despite knowing that the road to our economic recovery will be slow and painful, I have committed my Administration to carrying out its duties based on the fundamental principles of democracy, good governance and sound socio-economic policies.

At the beginning of this decade, Nauru was at the brink of total economic collapse. Much has been achieved to improve our economy and to address the resulting social problems. That has been accomplished by implementing a range of fiscal, economic and governance reforms. I am happy to say that Nauru today has stabilized. We are now at the beginning of a rebuilding phase in our history. However, I say this with a degree of caution and regard for the fragility of our situation.

In order to secure Nauru's recovery and to ensure rebuilding and development, we will need ongoing assistance from our development partners. We need coordinated assistance targeted at our priorities and in line with our strategies so that we may fulfil our promise for a better quality of life for my people.

Nauru appreciates the financial and material assistance from our development partners, in particular Australia, Taiwan, Japan, New Zealand and the European Union. We appeal for such cooperation to be continued in order to strengthen our nation-building efforts.

Since assuming office, I have been determined that Nauru learn from, and not repeat, the mistakes of the past. As a consequence of mismanagement and corruption, past Administrations took Nauru from what then seemed to be a bright future to standing on the brink of collapse. In that process, national reserves and assets were all lost, and we have been left with an unmanageable burden of domestic and external debt. Nauru will only ever be able to service a very small portion of that debt if we are to ensure ongoing recovery and sustained development. We therefore seek the understanding and consideration of those countries and institutions to which we owe money and appeal to them to allow debt forgiveness or major write-downs. At the same time, we are implementing financial, legislative and constitutional measures to ensure that this never happens again.

Our limited human resources capacity, relative to the enormity of the tasks yet to be accomplished, is a further impediment to our development goals. Improving the quality of education in our schools, promoting trade and skills training, certifying existing skills and encouraging ongoing professional and job-related development are therefore high priorities for my Government. Increasing our human resources capacity will not only serve to address the risk to sustaining our development, but will increase job opportunities for my people, domestically and abroad. With unemployment overall estimated above 30 per cent, and worse among our youth, labour migration and the associated remittances must be seen as part of the range of measures to secure Nauru's recovery and future.

I appeal to all developed countries with major workforce requirements to open up their job opportunities, reduce barriers to trade in services and promote labour mobility. That can contribute far more to the development of small States than many other traditional forms of aid. Moreover, such measures can be targeted at specific sectors and activities, for fixed time periods and with certain conditions. The New Zealand and Australian unskilled labour schemes for Pacific workers are two prime examples. The United States military expansion in Guam provides another opportunity for significant development assistance to the Pacific. We call on the United States for preferential access to those opportunities. That will require special trade, labour and immigration conditions.

We need to build our human resources capacity to shift Nauru away from its historical reliance on government and public sector employment. Likewise, we must develop the private sector in Nauru. We encourage foreign direct investment, and we welcome assistance in developing diversity and new industries in Nauru. My Government is focused on creating the environment to encourage and facilitate the growth of our private sector.

Nauru's recovery and future development are particularly vulnerable to external factors. Pacific island developing States are greatly exposed to both the food and the energy security crises. Dependence on imported foods, our remoteness and rising fuel and transport costs have made both food and energy security particularly critical issues for our region.

That is especially true for Nauru. Consider our situation: our island home is fringed by a narrow rim, where my people live just a couple of metres above sea level. The mining of phosphate on Nauru has left large pinnacle rocks covering 80 per cent of the island, which prevents agriculture and contributes to desertification and drought.

Although we place a high priority on the production of nutritious traditional staples, arable land is just too scarce to achieve a sustainable level of food security. The Secretary-General stated in his address yesterday (see A/63/PV.5) that at this time last year rice cost $330 a ton and that today it is now $730. Nauru is paying nearly double that. Our imported rice costs us $1,340 a ton. Rice and other staples are simply becoming unaffordable. Without urgent attention to our region, it is estimated that an additional 5 per cent of our people will slip into poverty because of high food prices.

We need the world to increase food production. That requires investment in training and in implementing appropriate farming techniques, together with efficient seed and fertilizer distribution. We also need increased access to food. That includes reviewing trade policies on food aid.

The energy crisis is anther significant external factor that has an impact on our recovery and the security of our future. Nauru already cannot afford the cost of the fuel required to provide for all its energy needs. As a consequence, my people suffer, with scheduled power cuts of up to eight or more hours every single day. That has an impact on parents' ability to care for and feed their children. Without power, houses have no running water, adding to health and sanitation problems. Power shedding limits business development and impedes government services and productivity.

The energy crisis is further disproportionately impacting Nauru in terms of transport services. Sea, land and air, passenger and freight: all are fast becoming unaffordable for my people, further isolating our island nation and hindering our sustainable development. We need urgent assistance, both to develop immediate alternative sources of energy and to access economically viable sources of fuel.

The current reliance on fossil fuels for energy has further particular significance for the Pacific small island developing States. It has resulted in emissions that are causing sea-level rise and climate change. This is not scientific theory: we are experiencing the effects right now.

As with the food crisis, Nauru and the Pacific are not contributors to the causes, but we are particularly vulnerable. We will pay the highest costs and are the first countries to feel the direct consequences. Global warming is predicted conservatively to raise sea levels by one metre in this century. That will flood our only habitable land. Our people will be literally trapped between the rising sea and an ancient, uninhabitable coral field.

Despite our many challenges, we are working hard to create a safe and sustainable haven from the rising sea. We must rehabilitate our mined phosphate lands and return them to a habitable, arable state. The cost of rehabilitating 80 per cent of our island is well beyond our immediate means. Rehabilitation of the island is a high priority, and, as part of climate change adaptation, we call for sufficient funding mechanisms, including support from the United Nations and financial and private sector institutions, to help restore our nation and improve our resilience.

To address climate change as a world society, we need to meet much of our energy needs through renewable energy sources, and by reducing emissions from fuels and using cleaner fuels. But as critical as that is for my nation, it is clear to me that the emitting countries have yet to do all they can. We all share the same global climate. It is therefore vital that all countries give much greater impetus to developing alternate energy sources, increase investment and implement real measures to address climate change.

The issue of climate change for Pacific island nations is a threat to international peace and security. The preamble to the United Nations Charter stipulates that a primary purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security. The Security Council is charged with protecting human rights, together with ensuring the integrity and security of States. It is the paramount international forum available to Pacific island countries in which to draw attention to the dangers that their islands and populations face due to the adverse effects of climate change.

We do not expect the Security Council to become involved in the details of the discussions in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but we do expect the Security Council to keep the matter under continuous review so as to ensure that all countries contribute to solving the climate change problem and that their efforts match their resources and capacities. We also expect that the Security Council will review particularly sensitive issues such as the implications of the loss of land and resources and the displacement of people for sovereignty and international legal rights.

Nauru has incorporated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into its national sustainable development strategy. Pacific island countries, including Nauru, are struggling in many areas of the MDGs as a consequence of the recent fuel and food crises and the effects of climate change.

We lament the fact that the gap between promise and implementation continues to frustrate our achievement of the full range of internationally agreed development goals that are particularly relevant to

small island developing States. It is extremely distressing that those goals were determined by consensus of the international community yet developed countries have yet to contribute the 0.7 per cent of gross national income committed to assist developing countries in meeting their targets.

On the eve of the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, may I call on the United Nations once more to rededicate itself to making development one of the highest priorities of the Organization. I would remind the United Nations of its commitment to open a total of eight new offices in Pacific island countries. We hope that the Organization will not waiver in its commitment to support our national priorities in meeting the MDGs and provide us with the urgently needed international civil servants to help with our pursuit of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Sixty-three years after the United Nations was founded on the noble ideals of establishing a peaceful, free and tolerant global order, the world community still suffers from the scourges of war, poverty, oppression and discrimination, even as it faces today's colossal global challenges that threaten our very existence. If the United Nations is to remain devoted to the ideals upon which it was founded, it is absolutely critical that it be reformed through the revitalization and empowerment of the General Assembly. If the United Nations is to remain a defender of human rights and international peace, it is crucial that the Security Council be expanded to better reflect geo-political realities of the modern world. That would mean giving permanent seats to Japan, India, Germany and Brazil.

If the United Nations prides itself on being an inclusive Organization that champions the rights of everyone, it cannot continue to deny the fundamental right of Taiwan's 23 million people to participate in the specialized agencies of the United Nations. It is clear to all of us that cross-Strait relations have been improving since May 2008 and that leaders from both sides have openly shown a willingness to work together to create a positive atmosphere. It is now time for the United Nations to find a solution to the exclusion of Taiwan. Only by allowing Taiwan to participate meaningfully in the specialized agencies of the United Nations can the principle of universality and democratization of the Organization be fulfilled, and regional peace and prosperity ensured.

It is very simple and straightforward: we have vowed to the people, now let us keep our promise.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saca González (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I have the pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on being elected to preside over this session, an honour falling to a Central American for the second time in the history of the United Nations. I wish you every success and commend you once again. I would also like to express our gratitude for the work done by Mr. Kerim as President of the previous session. On behalf of El Salvador, I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General for the dynamism and determination with which he is leading the Organization.

It seems to me very timely that the central focus of debate for this session is the impact of the global food crisis on the issue of poverty and hunger throughout the world, including the need to democratize the United Nations. It is increasingly evident every day that the world is facing a global crisis that has a negative impact on development efforts, especially in the poorest countries. Food, climate, energy and financial problems are aggravating the already difficult situation of developing countries.

We are gathered here because we have a duty to assume the political and moral responsibility to respond to the problems currently facing the international community. The world must learn from both its successes and its failures. We must learn to face crises collectively and turn them into opportunities, for no one can solve them alone any longer.

In order to preserve the progress made in the area of development, we need to strengthen global leadership to make it both decisive and accountable. In the current crisis, there is a danger that we could lose ground.

The economic and financial system cannot be at the mercy of markets that operate on speculation. Together, we must rebuild a wise capitalist system that provides financing for economic development, rather than one that rewards speculation.

We must help to prevent and mitigate serious financial fluctuations. We must balance accounts and stabilize credit. I agree with the President of the French Republic that, in order to achieve this, countries directly affected by the situation must meet as soon as possible to find joint solutions to what is the most acute financial crisis the world has experienced in 75 years.

It is undeniable the rise — and above all the instability — in the price of oil continues to have a negative impact on development efforts in most countries in the world, in particular the smallest and most vulnerable among them.

Here, I would like to reiterate the call I made from this very rostrum last year (see A/62/PV.6), for oil-producing countries to seek and implement flexible mechanisms aimed at ensuring that hydrocarbon prices do not continue to drastically affect developing countries. Such mechanisms, of course, should not ignore the harmful effects of speculation by intermediaries in the world markets.

If we do not act jointly and immediately, and if, in this forum, we are not able to come up with a balanced solution to this problem, we will effectively condemn oil-importing countries to bankruptcy for years to come. We have invested in development, and we have worked as hard as possible to achieve the MDGs; those successes will be swept aside by the excessive and crippling prices of oil. We cannot continue to wait. We must take immediate political decisions to shore up development and prevent a deeper crisis in order to preserve global peace, security and stability.

Faced with the food crisis, which is directly affecting us all, we support the implementation of the measures agreed upon during the June 2008 High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. We call for action and assistance, particularly for affected developing countries.

We would like to congratulate the Group of Eight (G8) on its decision to support, in the framework of the United Nations system, the establishment of a world agriculture and food association, and the identification of a range of actions to address the food crisis, including through the participation of major institutions.

In the face of this tangle of problems that require creative responses, the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) advocate the initiative on action under the Staple Grains Plan, which concentrates in particular on strengthening technical assistance and public and private assistance and a programme for financing, land leasing and a temporary worker programme.

The countries of SICA and Brazil, during El Salvador's pro tempore presidency of that organization, supported the holding of a special session of the General Assembly on the world food and energy crisis. As a result, a high-level meeting on food security was held, beginning on 18 July, in this very Hall, during which El Salvador explained the actions that we have undertaken in order to deal with the crisis in Central America, particularly in the most vulnerable areas.

In our country, El Salvador, we are responding with social programmes aimed at reducing extreme poverty, fighting hunger and infant malnutrition, and attaining other MDGs. At the next Ibero-American summit of heads of State or Government, which will be held in El Salvador, the subject of children under the age of five will be a matter of priority.

In order to counter the impact of the economic crisis on Salvadoranian households, we have created a multidisciplinary commission with broad participation, which has proposed a series of measures to address

current effects and promote a social pact of national solidarity for productivity and employment. Those solutions involve business people, workers, political parties and civil society bodies, and the creation of a committee for the implementation of viable priority actions.

One of the most successful measures that we have implemented in El Salvador to prevent a food crisis is the promotion of improved seed varieties for staple grains, which has enabled us to achieve record production this year.

However, I have to tell the Assembly that all the efforts of solidarity we make as a global forum or as individual countries require broad participation, democratic stability, the enjoyment of full individual liberties, and a genuine sense of social responsibility on the part of Governments, irrespective of their ideologies. International cooperation is also important for strengthening national and regional efforts. That is why El Salvador has insisted on the issue of cooperation with middle-income countries.

In October 2007, at San Salvador, we held the second International Conference on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries. In August 2008, in Namibia, my country co-chaired the third Conference on that subject. At that meeting, we agreed on measures including improving access to markets, reducing poverty, fulfilling the MDGs, increasing the competitiveness of our economies and improving our physical and financial infrastructures.

The problems we face require decisive measures to be taken. In that respect, I would ask all Member States to support the fulfilment and implementation of the commitments agreed upon in the El Salvador Consensus and the Namibia Declaration, as well as the consideration of this topic at the Global Conference on Financing for Development in Doha. Those efforts should lead to a General Assembly resolution with the objective of reviewing current practices in the area of international cooperation.

For middle-income countries, injustice is clearly to be seen in international cooperation. The commitment I propose should lead us to swiftly prepare a multidisciplinary plan of action, global in its scope, in order to strengthen development cooperation for middle-income countries. We believe that new types of development cooperation must also be included, such as South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation, the exchange of debt for investment in social areas, such as health, education and the environment, as we are already doing with Spain, France and Germany. All of this could help us to attain all of the MDGs and to meet other parameters established by the United Nations.

In my view, it is important that as we seek solutions to all of those problems, we never abandon our ongoing efforts to achieve the MDGs. In that respect, I am very happy to describe some of the achievements we made during the period from 2001 to 2007.

Extreme poverty at the national level was reduced from 32.6 per cent in 2001 to 12.8 per cent in 2007. With regard to education, the net rate of school enrolment increased from 78 to 93 per cent during that same period. The percentage of schoolchildren who enter the first grade of primary school and complete the fifth grade has increased from 58 to 80 per cent, and the literacy rate for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 has increased from 85 to 95 per cent. I would also like to inform you that the Constitution of El Salvador stipulates that primary education must be free. With tremendous effort, our Government has achieved and established free secondary education in all El Salvador's public education institutions.

With regard to environmental sustainability, the percentage of the population without access to drinking water dropped from 23.9 to 12.1 per cent and without access to sanitation from 21.9 to 8.1 per cent.

In the fight against HIV/AIDS, I am very pleased to report on the major efforts that we have undertaken in El Salvador to help those suffering from HIV/AIDS — first and foremost, universal free antiretroviral drugs for all those who need them, with a great number of decentralized hospitals providing that treatment. In the last four years, we have managed to reduce the mortality rate of those with HIV/AIDS by 35 per cent and the number of children born with HIV/AIDS by 89.14 per cent, falling from 150 to 15 children annually.

With regard to implementing the goals of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children in 2002, contained in the Plan of Action Creating a World Fit for Children (A/S-27/19/Rev.1), I am pleased to report the progress El Salvador has made. We have achieved 15 of the 35 goals, particularly in the reduction of extreme poverty, immunization, infant and

maternal mortality and education of children and adolescents.

Programmes such as the Solidarity Network, which maps poverty in order to identify extreme poverty, Alliance with the Family with 19 measures to help the family purse, Solidarity Fund for Health and healthy schools have been key to those successes. I must underline that we have achieved some of the targets established under the Millennium Development Goals before the 2015 deadline, in particular concerning poverty reduction, gender equality and access to drinking water. That is why we support the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold a summit in 2010 to review the progress made in implementing the Goals.

With regard to existing regional asymmetries, and even more those between developed and underdeveloped countries, and the role the United Nations should play regarding sustainable development, the Member States need a modern, strong global Organization with institutions able effectively to face the new challenges of the current international situation.

To that end, El Salvador would like to reiterate its resolute support for the United Nations reform process, so that the purposes and principles for which the Organization was created in 1945 can be fulfilled, particularly today when we are facing global threats against peace, security, human rights and international cooperation — fundamental pillars of development.

Security Council reform is particularly important as part of that effort, and in that respect, we would like to stress the need to bring changes to make that institution more representative, democratic and transparent, so as to adapt it to the current international situation.

From this rostrum, I should like to reiterate once again our profound appreciation to the United Nations system for supporting the process of coordinating and reinforcing the peace agreements in El Salvador. Today, El Salvador is a model. We are living witnesses of the fundamental role of the United Nations in guaranteeing peace and stability.

Mindful of our experience, El Salvador is participating actively as Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. Similarly, we have become a troop-contributing country within the United Nations system, a role that we are proud to assume to defend world peace and security in times of need. On that basis, we have participated and continue to take part in operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Western Sahara, Liberia, Iraq and Haiti, and recently, we joined the Spanish contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Migration, particularly when undocumented, has increasingly become a source of differences, instability and conflict. As a country of origin, transit and destination for migratory flows, we appeal for the continued strengthening of actions to combat and prevent the illegal trafficking of migrants and trade in persons in all their forms and for guaranteeing full protection and support for the victims of those crimes, particularly women and children.

While respecting the sovereign rights of States with regard to their immigration policies, we call for a comprehensive approach to international migration that values the positive contributions made by immigrants to the economy and culture of the communities where they live, and favours schemes in support of controlled migration, including temporary work programmes. I should like to point out that, in the United States alone, around 12 million undocumented migrants reside, awaiting humane and comprehensive immigration reform. They are good, hard-working people, who have sacrificed their lives to support their families.

Another subject on which we must try to achieve consensus is climate change and global warming. I would like to stress that our country is meeting its commitment to support international efforts to address the effects of climate change.

In that regard, El Salvador is actively participating in the international negotiations aimed at creating an instrument that will complement the Kyoto Protocol on the emission of greenhouse gases after 2012, and awaits the and successful conclusion of those negotiations in 2009 at the conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In the context of Central America, on 28 May 2008, the Presidents of the countries in the region adopted, at the invitation of my colleague and friend President Manuel José Zelaya Rosales of Honduras, the Declaration of San Pedro Sula on climate change and the environment, which set out guidelines for tackling the serious problems arising from climate change. In El Salvador, recently we launched the innovative

project Green Network, which seeks to involve Government and private institutions and the Ministries of the Environment and of Education in the protection of the environment through the implementation of programmes to improve social and environmental conditions for the most vulnerable.

That initiative has encouraged participation in areas such as water security, judicious use of timber to protect the forests, recycling in schools, energy saving and responsible environmental business policies.

As the emissary of a nation that lives in democracy and peace, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, I should like to reiterate once again, on behalf of El Salvador, our firm support for the aspirations of the people of the Republic of China in Taiwan to participate in the international institutional structure, particularly in the United Nations system. We support the initiative to examine the participation of that country in the specialized agencies of the United Nations, with particular emphasis on the fact that the people of that country cannot and should not remain isolated from the international community and could contribute experience, resources and knowledge to deal with the challenges that we all face.

I also wish to refer to the case of Palestine. Palestine should have its own State, as does Israel, with secure borders. I think that the United Nations should play a greater and more active role in ensuring that the Palestinian people have their own territory and that the territory of Israel is also respected through secure borders.

This is the fifth time during my administration that the Government of El Salvador has been represented at the highest level in this important forum, which is the universal and most democratic body in our Organization. My presence in the General Assembly and in other high-level meetings to discuss matters of global interest constitutes an unequivocal demonstration of the importance and relevance we all attach to the work of the United Nations.

I would like to finalize my intervention as the President of El Salvador in this forum. I hope that the Organization will be strengthened on the basis of understanding, solidarity and the political will of all of its Members. I am absolutely convinced that if we combine our wills, our abilities and our resources, we will be able to steer the United Nations so that it may effectively fulfil its role of promoting peace, security, justice and sustainable development.

Despite the problems in the world, I am an eternal optimist. Problems always have solutions, and it is easier to find those solutions together. We must promote tolerance and human dignity. There is no greater bastion for peace and brotherhood than understanding and respect for our diversity, our beliefs and our fundamental values, if we are to live together peacefully and with solidarity between nations.

I also wish to state today, within this global forum, that the Central America of 20 years ago has disappeared, that the world's image of it is mistaken. The Central American countries and the Central American Integration System — SICA — are working well. Integration is accelerating. Over the last three years we have made more progress in Central American integration than we have made over the last fifty years.

Central America has taken valiant, bold decisions, among them the customs union. Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras will be making progress in the next few weeks in the area of customs — free movement of people and goods in a Central America of 40 million people living in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility, with the normal problems of any country, but with many exchanges and closer contacts between leaders.

Thanks to all, and may the supreme Creator guide us towards those great goals. May God bless our Organization, the whole world and Central America, and may God bless the Earth to which El Salvador belongs.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan, President of the Republic of Suriname

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan, President of the Republic of Suriname, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Venetiaan: Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I am pleased to see a member of our regional group of Latin America and the Caribbean in that high office. I am convinced that your longstanding diplomatic experience and in-depth knowledge of current international issues will enable you to successfully discharge the high responsibility of your office. I would also like to recognize the able stewardship and valuable work of your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, during the Assembly's sixty-second session.

To the Secretary-General of the Organization, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, I pledge Suriname's full support in implementing the resolutions of the United Nations to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Charter for sustainable development, international peace and security and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, while many of these rights are still under serious pressure. New threats, such as global warming and climate change and most recently the global food and energy crises, are an infringement on people's rights to food, health, education, security and the overall freedom to live in dignity. Those tribulations are intertwined and universal and thus beyond the control of any single nation. Millions of vulnerable people are therefore looking to the international community, with the United Nations at the helm, for effective measures to bring some kind of relief.

The Economic and Social Council recently recognized the seriousness and complexity of the global food crisis and reiterated that its consequences require a comprehensive response by national Governments and the international community. It is essential for us to intensify our combined efforts, and we therefore support the emergency global partnership plan for food, called for by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his address to the General Assembly high-level event on the global food and climate change crises.

The financial and monetary implications of the global crisis require substantial political and financial commitments from us all, from national Governments, from multilateral organizations, including international financial institutions, and from the private sector. We will have to change the way that we, human beings, behave towards Mother Nature and we will have to find a solution to policies and regulations that are detrimental to our progress, such as protectionist agricultural policies in developed countries that are causing low production in the agricultural sector of many developing countries. If we do not find lasting solutions now, the cost of our inaction will be unacceptably high, and the threats that we will most likely pass on to the next generation will be devastating.

My country, Suriname, was on the right track towards achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty reduction sustained by economic growth rates of over 5 per cent annually in the past three years, with predictions by renowned international financial institutions of approximately 8 per cent growth for the coming years. As a result of the current food and energy crises, as well as the recent volatility of financial markets, it has now become a challenge for us to keep up the pace and quality of our development.

My Government has taken action and has already put some measures in place to respond to the new difficulties we are facing because of those external developments. We have expanded social security to cover the most needy, such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities, we have put in place food programmes for schoolchildren, and we have increased salaries and Government pensions, which had weakened as a result of years of inflation. The Government has now called upon the private sector to follow its lead and restore eroded salaries and pensions.

Africa, the cradle of humanity, is a continent with immense capability, endowed with indispensable human and natural potential. Paradoxically, in many parts of the continent, development is lagging behind or even absent, and development perspectives are bleak.

My country commends Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for holding the important high-level meeting on "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward", which took place just two days ago. It is our genuine expectation that the outcome of that meeting will lead to new and unique opportunities for impacting positively on and contributing to the development of Africa.

Suriname remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. My country underscores the principle of equality before the law and emphasizes that everyone should be held accountable for their actions. Against that backdrop, Suriname acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on 15 July of this year. We thus expressed our commitment to fighting the impunity of the perpetrators of gross human rights violations. However, providing the Court with its full potential to meet its mandate depends on a collective commitment at the global level.

Environmental disturbances today are of such magnitude that we can no longer ignore their negative impact on the world's resources. As a country with 90 per cent of its territory covered by forests within which lies one of the largest stretches of pristine tropical rainforests on earth, Suriname is aware of its value and potential to contribute to the global mitigation of climate change, the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of water resources.

However, the contribution of the international community to the preservation and protection of such globally valuable resources is not proportionate to the sacrifice made by the forested countries. Moreover, forested countries like Suriname with very low deforestation rates are forgotten in mechanisms devised to compensate for deforestation.

Suriname recently hosted the Paramaribo Dialogue, a country-led initiative on financing for sustainable forest management in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests. During that international dialogue, multiple stakeholders from all over the world came together to develop substantive proposals for the establishment of an international financial framework to assist in future sustainable forest management.

We stress the importance of new financing mechanisms, since good management of forests and other natural resources cannot and should not be at the expense of the development of our own peoples, the peoples of countries with high forest coverage and low deforestation rates. We therefore look forward to substantial investments to support the sustainable development of such countries.

Suriname has supported the restructuring process of the United Nations from the start, with the aim of achieving a more effective and efficient Organization that would be better equipped to adequately address old and new challenges. In that process, we expect that the role of the United Nations as a partner in development will gain further relevance and achieve a more coherent and enhanced presence in support of capacity-building and sustainable development.

Suriname is also currently engaged in a "One UN" policy process, through which it responds to the need for coherent involvement of the United Nations in its development efforts. To that end, Suriname and the United Nations agencies signed the Country Programme Action Plan for the period 2008-2011, which also addresses the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.

We have entered an era of growing anxieties and concerns that go beyond national borders. The contemporary world situation requires harmonization of the United Nations with current international developments. Suriname believes that the United Nations should be given the tools and instruments to enable the Organization to address global challenges in support of a comprehensive and coherent development agenda in the interest of all the nations of the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Caballeros (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to represent my country, Guatemala, in this high international forum. It is an honour for me to represent a people who have fought for their well-being and freedom for decades, specifically the past 54 years. My Administration is an expression of precisely that desire, because, after all those years, governmental actions are now being prioritized around the human person, the concepts of solidarity and social cohesion and, especially, in the 254 days since I took office, attention to the poorest and most marginalized among our population, in particular the 23 indigenous peoples that constitute our nation.

First, I should like to commend Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, whom we, with much Central American pride, see presiding over the General Assembly at its present session, following in the footsteps of a fellow Guatemalan, Mr. Emilio Arenales Catalán. I know that Miguel's experience and life example will ensure the success of this session.

I also wish to thank the United Nations for assisting Guatemala in its peace process and for following up on it with the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and, most recently, with the presence of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), a unique mechanism that will help us combat impunity — indeed, we are the only country to have such a mechanism.

Participating in the present session of the Assembly are world leaders who will be remembered in 10 or 20 years' time for having had the wisdom to emerge from the present crisis — a crisis regarding which, in certain areas and at certain times, there has been a marked absence of global solidarity. I join Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann in his appeal for solidarity. I believe that the great remedy for this crisis is global solidarity. We have globalized trade and information, but we have not gained the wisdom to globalize humanity or to globalize labour to ensure that migrants are not treated as criminals and that — like products, trade and money — they have freedom of movement across borders. Our migrants seek nothing more than the opportunities offered by globalization and the opening of borders. It was that very opening that worsened their poverty and encouraged them to abandon their communities.

That is why I am making a special appeal and proposal to the Secretary-General that we no longer try to resolve the problem of migration bilaterally; rather, we must do so as a bloc. For example, I should like to propose that the United Nations create a forum composed of former Presidents of countries of origin and countries receiving great numbers of migrants, such as the brotherly countries of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico. Together, in six months' time, we could formulate a specific proposal to finally put an end to a situation that is a scourge for so many families, so many Guatemalans and many other nations.

I should also like to discuss the scourges of drug trafficking and organized crime, which greatly afflict our populations. Only 254 days after taking office, our Government has begun a comprehensive process of reforming the security forces. We have changed the high command of the army and the entire command of the national police so that we can fight impunity together with CICIG and the United Nations system. Thus, Guatemala can finally achieve the true, firm and lasting peace for which, with such hope, we signed an agreement here on 29 December 1996.

Everything that happens in the outside world affects us. Foreign manipulation and speculation related to oil and food affects us. As my good friend President Saca of El Salvador said earlier, our countries are accomplishing their national tasks. In 254 days, my Government has, through social cohesion, returned to the people of Guatemala what belongs to them under their Constitution: free education and health care — totally free, as stipulated in the Constitution. We have broken a paradigm. In Guatemala, it used to be forbidden to get sick after 5 p.m., because the country's health clinics closed at that time. Today, 52 municipalities out of a total of 333 already have comprehensive health services. In addition, 300,000 children now have renovated schools with teachers, desks and all the necessary equipment.

With determination, we can do what is required, but we need solidarity among everyone. We need and participate in Central American solidarity, which enables us to tell the world that the free market works.

We have had a common market for 50 years, and we know that it works. But we also know that that common market requires social solidarity among ourselves.

I have always believed that solidarity is not giving what one has left over, but rather giving what someone else needs; it is very easy to give what one has left over. Giving what someone else needs requires will and solidarity. We are aware of — and have heard our colleagues' statements about — this international crisis, but there is a much deeper crisis. The crises that the world's leaders must face are the crisis of hunger, the crisis of discrimination and the crisis of poverty. It is the crisis of hunger that all the Governments present here today are fighting against, but that is also a global issue. We in Guatemala are a people of maize, but a few years ago they said it was bad business to plant maize and destroyed the production systems. Today, Guatemala imports maize.

I believe that now is the time for solidarity and true global security. Perhaps civil security is the easiest to achieve, despite the fact that my country is complex. Sovereignty of food, sovereignty of health, sovereignty of knowledge — these are more difficult to achieve.

We have planned to achieve solidarity, productivity, a regional spirit and governance. We have established a system of national dialogue that is enabling all the country's social sectors to come to the negotiating table, to arrive at a true national understanding and to begin rebuilding a country that, for 54 years, was afflicted by marginalization, the cold war, hunger and bad Governments.

I am convinced that new times have come for Latin America. I am convinced that all our Latin American summits and meetings herald new times. We have our differences and individual characteristics, but Latin America has begun to look north, south and to the centre, to the Caribbean, and we see a continent with the possibility of stronger unity, of stronger horizontal South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation. Our neighbours, our dear Central America — we are peoples rooted in the region who want a strong and united Central America.

This Assembly could take a momentous turn for our future as a planet. Of course we are concerned by climate change, but we have to maintain our Mayan biosphere so that others can breathe while our communities are dying of hunger. That is solidarity. We give oxygen, but we receive technology. We give oxygen, but we receive solidarity. We give oxygen, and we receive the understanding of countries that we deserve a better fate on the basis of this international solidarity.

We have also promoted tax reform. It is no secret for many that tax reform in Guatemala meant problems and coups d'état. But now we have tax reform, with a good level of consensus. There is also commitment to transparency and to the quality of expenditures. In only 254 days 7 per cent of the national budget was directed to the poor, money that used to be and today would have been spent entirely on other things and without reference to the poor. Seven towns have begun to lower their maternal mortality indicators. Health centres are packed, because they now provide services and they are open. There are significantly more children in schools in the 45 towns that are priorities. This can be done, if there is the determination to do it.

Our security is perhaps the greatest while El Salvador, Colombia and Mexico are more successful in fighting drug trafficking. Guatemala pays the bills. That is why in this brief time I wish to thank my neighbours, Colombia, for the support that they have given us so that we can confront drug trafficking and organized crime on a regional scale. Our young people should not have to pay for the weaknesses of others. Our unassuming people and our indigenous people should not have to pay for the vices of others. I believe that if we work regionally things will go better.

I should like to acknowledge and reiterate our gratitude to the United Nations system for the peace in Guatemala that was sought during the eight years of negotiations, in which I had the honour to take part. Its follow-up with the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and now with the presence of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) makes it easier for us to take the difficult road towards the integration and development of Guatemala and towards equity in Guatemala.

I should like to share with members that the programmes for social cohesion that were learned and developed in Guatemala, but also acquired in friendly countries, are yielding results. The "My Family Makes Progress" programme is now affecting 40,000 families,

and the young people are going to school and to health facilities. The "Shopping Bag Solidarity" programme is yielding results in the urban areas, and "Open Schools" is reducing delinquency in the areas of higher risk in Guatemala City.

If we had the courage to globalize the economy we would now have the challenge, and almost the obligation, to globalize all of mankind. Such globalization would lead to comprehensive, global solidarity; it could be the way to save our planet. It could be that we save it by combining our successes and trying to avoid our errors.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, and with great pride, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kaczyński (*spoke in Polish; English text provided by the delegation*): Let me start by expressing my respect and gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its previous session, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, whose active involvement and initiatives have contributed to a broader Assembly agenda and facilitated its work. I wish to extend my congratulations to his successor, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann. I congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment and wish you fruitful work.

The past year has seen many new challenges and problems with which the international community has to deal. In our attempts to respond to these problems and to search for the best solutions we have recognized yet again that different crises cannot be successfully overcome without referring to such universal values as democracy, freedom and solidarity.

One of the biggest global challenges at present is the food crisis and its consequences. The decision to make that issue the central theme of this year's General Assembly session testifies to the special role of the United Nations as a forum for debate focused on major global challenges. Poland appreciates the initiative to juxtapose the debate on the food crisis with discussions about the need to democratize the United Nations, as it is only a democratic and effective United Nations that can face up to the global challenges of eliminating hunger and poverty and ensuring the sustainable development of the poorest nations. That is why we remain certain that the United Nations reform process should continue.

One of the fundamentals of the democratic governance of the United Nations is the rule "one State, one vote". Each State should be given the opportunity to decide in which direction the United Nations will head, and the General Assembly remains the most important forum for such democratic debate. In this context, it is especially important to streamline the decision-making mechanism.

We are in favour of accelerating the pace of work on Security Council reform. The number of non-permanent members of the Council should be increased so as to truly reflect today's world. Let us remember that some of the rules in that regard were laid down in a world that was fundamentally different from today's.

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services": that principle is enshrined in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose sixtieth anniversary we celebrate this year. As an international community, we bear responsibility for their fulfilment.

Fighting against hunger and poverty is among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has been almost eight years since the international community set them. Despite numerous declarations and commitments we are still short of achieving the Goals. It will be impossible to overcome the current crisis or carry out our development policies unless —

and I stress this — every country shoulders its individual responsibility, takes concrete steps and assesses the progress made so far. We should make joint efforts to promote a global development programme with the MDGs as its basis.

It was in that vein that Poland joined British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in endorsing the call to action on the MDGs. We hope that that statement, which reflects a broad understanding among countries, business representatives, non-governmental organizations and faith groups will contribute to the full attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that the high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals taking place on 25 September will result in concrete commitments that will be implemented in a timely manner: timeliness is of special importance.

As we analyse the causes of the food crisis and try to find effective prescriptions for combating poverty and hunger, we take note of the immense negative impact of climate change on these phenomena. Although the consequences of climate change will be felt globally, it is the poorest who will bear the brunt and who will be hurt the most severely. It goes without saying that, without solidarity, responsibility and enhanced mutual cooperation, developing countries will not be able to fulfil their commitments regarding reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and will fail to successfully adapt to climate change. This calls for a certain change of philosophy in our approach, and for much greater effort on the part of the North in favour of the South. What I am saying now is mere short hand: the rich should become much more committed to helping the poor. The United Nations is, if not the sole organization, then definitely the principal organization that can implement these objectives.

Poland wants to be an active partner in the international community's activities to that end. With this in mind, we will be hosting in Poznan in December this year the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. One of the key challenges facing this year's Conference is to work out solutions and mechanisms that will support and bring about true systemic change in developing countries. It is especially vital to ensure the funding of investments that will help to modernize the economies of those countries and help them reduce carbon dioxide emissions and adapt to climate change. I reiterate that there is no possibility of implementing these objectives without a major change in thinking, especially by the countries that now have the most resources. We hope that this year's Poznan Conference will lay strong foundations for reaching a new agreement in Copenhagen in December next year.

As holder of the presidency of the fourteenth session of the Conference of Parties, Poland will strive to bring the positions of major countries as close as possible so as to ensure maximum progress during the Poznan Conference. We anticipate cooperation and support from our international partners and friends. We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's deep commitment to the implementation of these objectives.

Introducing new, more climate-friendly technologies should be coupled with enhanced energy security and diversification of energy sources. As we do not yet have mechanisms to guarantee solidarity on the energy crisis among all States members of the European Union — I refer to the European Union but this is also applicable to all other States of the world — the issue of energy security becomes our priority.

Poland is following developments in Georgia with concern. We believe that engaging in dialogue and acting in a spirit of solidarity and consistency in implementing energy policy should become a priority for all European States, especially European Union States. It is only in that way that Europe can be assured of energy security, especially at a time of the complete unpredictability of actions of the current main suppliers of energy to Europe.

Poland's concern arises from the abuse by some States, especially one very powerful State, of energy as a tool to achieve political goals in relations with neighbours and with all the other nations that benefit from the supply of energy by that State.

Thus it is of fundamental importance to diversify the sources of supply, to introduce transparent rules regulating the energy trade and to extend transport infrastructure, especially by developing alternative routes and energy sources for the European Union, mainly from the Caspian Sea, Central Asia and the Middle East. This could significantly accelerate the development of the States of those areas and enhance their potential as part of global solidarity.

I have referred to Georgia in the context of energy security. But the situation in that country is far more serious. Several weeks ago we witnessed an illegal military aggression and the division of the country. That was an aggression against an independent State. Fundamental principles of international law, such as the inviolability of borders and respect for territorial integrity, were breached.

Without respect for those principles, the world will be a hotbed of not one but hundreds of conflicts. We cannot allow the relativization of international law. We cannot accept that international law is applicable to the weak but not binding on the strong. If we do, international law will have no positive impact, especially as concerns the principle of territorial integrity. We must not allow the undermining of a principle on the basis of which the United Nations was established 63 years ago in the aftermath of the Second World War as a consequence of the bankruptcy of the League of Nations. That founding principle of the United Nations is the principle of law and of opposition to the unlawful use of force.

Not all members come from countries neighbouring Georgia or from countries in or near Europe, but the problem of Georgia is a problem for us all, for every country that is grappling with issues relating to territorial integrity or to stronger neighbours abusing their advantages. The international order should be based on strict compliance with the United Nations Charter by all subjects of international law — first and foremost, by all States. It should be based on common responsibility for the fate of countries incapable of ensuring their own security alone.

Those were the motives that guided my response to the Georgian conflict and the actions of the Presidents of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. The complete implementation of the peace plan, which should also cover the issue of the territorial integrity of Georgia, is a prerequisite for the further discussions about the Caucasus to be held in Geneva in October and a prerequisite for the future of relations between the European Union — of which Poland is the twenty-sixth member — and Russia. Those relations can be correct and mutual only if both sides respect international law in their relations both with each other and with third parties.

One expression of Poland's involvement in international security is its participation in a counter-terrorism coalition in many volatile regions of the world. Today, more than 3,500 Polish troops and police officers are taking part in global peacekeeping and stabilization forces — from Africa to the Balkans, through the Middle East and Asia.

Iraq was one such place. Through the five years of its presence in Iraq, Poland has made efforts to help its Iraqi friends and allies to ensure strengthened external and internal security. Its mission, the main stage of which comes to an end this year, has clearly been a success. Iraq today is definitely safer and more stable than a few years ago, despite the doubts expressed in some circles.

What remains a challenge, however, is the situation in Afghanistan. We deeply believe that the mission in Afghanistan, in which Poland is also taking an active part, is bound to end in success, not only a military success in the fight against terrorism but also the success of the Afghan nation in improving its day-to-day existence. Military action must also be accompanied by measures to stabilize the Afghan economy, improve the internal security situation and enable Afghanistan to grow more quickly. I should like to believe that this mission will end successfully.

The continuing lack of stability in the Middle East is a source of concern for almost — the "almost" is regrettable — every country in the world, including Poland. The lengthy process of building an independent Palestinian State should be completed as soon as possible, for the sake of Palestinians and Israelis alike, both nations being Poland's friends. We wish the Palestinian people every success in their struggle for an independent State. To Israel, with which we have important historic ties, because many of its citizens come from Poland, we wish successes and peace, a peace much needed by Israel.

I note with pleasure that our hopes are being raised by the situation in Lebanon. Poland believes that the elections and the new President will bring the stability and peace for which the Lebanese people have been waiting for 35 years — and even before that the situation was often difficult. We wish the new Lebanese authorities and the nation of Lebanon every success. We will be involved in this part of the world in a spirit of international solidarity and because of our historic ties with the region.

The issues I have mentioned cannot be resolved by a single State or a single group of States. Today we

see clearly that we need joint action by all countries: rich and poor, from both the east and the west. However, in today's world, where the division into east and west is no longer as important as it was in the past, what we need above all is solidarity between north and south; we must give help to those in need.

We need to promote democracy, of course adapting it to the cultural conditions and traditions of a given State, because, regardless of its flaws, there has never in our history been a system more friendly to mankind. We should act jointly and in a spirit of solidarity through effectively operating international structures such as the United Nations and its agencies, which have global reach and an unchallenged position. The Secretary-General rightly says that there should be deeper coordination between the work of the agencies, irrespective of the great successes which the bodies affiliated to the United Nations have scored over recent decades.

What is most important, however, is to ensure universal respect for international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I hope that when we meet next year during the sixty-fourth session the world will be slightly safer and a little closer to the principles that I have had the honour to refer to in this address.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. François Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Central African Republic.

Mr. François Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. François Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bozizé (*spoke in French*): First, I sincerely congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. The role played by his country, Nicaragua, in pursuing the purposes of the United Nations and his long and distinguished career as a diplomat have been recognized by his election. I assure him of my country's support and my own support as he carries out his difficult and noble mission.

I also pay Mr. Srgjan Kerim, who presided over the sixty-second session, a well deserved tribute for the excellent work he did throughout his term in office.

I wish to express words of encouragement to the Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for the important direction he has given our Organization since taking up his duties.

My country, the Central African Republic, has since 1996 experienced domestic instability fuelled by the effects of numerous conflicts in neighbouring territories. The Darfur crisis and the constant incursions of irregular armed bands in the north-east and north-west and of the Lord's Resistance Army on the southern frontier, bordering on the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been accompanied by plunder, rape, deportation and the conscription of children under the age of 10.

The use of that part of the Central African Republic territory as a rear base for non-State armed elements represents a danger of the same type as those that led to Security Council resolution 1778 (2007).

I welcome the mandate given to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) as part of a multidimensional operation to restore the safety and security conditions needed for a voluntary and lasting return of refugees and persons displaced by the conflicts in that area of the three frontiers that straddle the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan.

However, with the mandate of the European Union Force (EUFOR) ending in March 2009, and because of the fragility of the situation in the north-east and growing insecurity in the south-east, it is highly desirable that MINURCAT's mission be revised and enlarged. We earnestly hope that it will go beyond its

current framework to become an operational force of the United Nations, and that cooperation between MINURCAT and the other forces involved at the regional and community levels will continue.

Referring to the situation in my country gives me the opportunity to emphasize that the recurrent political and military crises have further increased poverty and food insecurity, particularly in the rural and agricultural areas.

A suggested theme for this year's general debate — the impact of the world food crisis on poverty and hunger throughout the world — in addition to the need to democratize the United Nations, is at the heart of the international community's concerns, and has been for some decades. The first matter involves the following questions: climate conditions, demographic problems, indebtedness, free and equitable trade, redirecting the agricultural sector towards biofuels, the price of oil and armed conflicts.

In the current context of world trade and the world economy, there is a tendency for natural disasters and armed conflicts, because of their effect on socio-economic structures, to accentuate the impact of the food crisis on developing countries.

For the Central African Republic, the food crisis can be seen as somewhat paradoxical, in view of our natural potential. The climate throughout the country is favourable to pluvial agriculture, with an enviable annual rainfall of 800 millimetres in the extreme north and more than 1,500 millimetres in the south, and an availability of fresh water estimated at 37,000 cubic metres per inhabitant.

Of more than 15 million hectares of arable land, only 600,000 to 700,000 are cultivated. That is 1 per cent of our national territory and 4.4 per cent of the total arable area. Less than 0.5 million hectares are being actively exploited by agricultural workers.

Stock-raising land represents 9.3 million hectares out of a total of 16 million, with livestock totalling about 3.2 million head of tropical breeds.

The challenges to be overcome are the insecurity of rural areas, the disorganization of agricultural producers, the low degree of support for the rural community, the fact of being landlocked, the lack of basic economic and social infrastructures, the exodus from the countryside and the impact of HIV/AIDS and malaria, which have reduced the labour force and resulted in limited access to credit and fostered social discrimination.

One of the Millennium Development Goals is to halve, between 1996 and 2015, the number of those suffering from hunger, and to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the degree of poverty.

There are a number of causes of the problems: so-called natural causes and human causes. The natural causes result from natural disasters: drought, desertification, degradation of the environment and floods, resulting in the erosion of arable land. Human causes are regarded as having been responsible for more than 35 per cent of the food emergencies in 2004, compared with only 15 per cent in 1992. Wars and economic and social upheaval have caused or worsened the food situation.

The General Assembly is the appropriate forum in which to raise and debate the problems confronting our world today. That is what is expected of us in the Assembly.

There is no human endeavour that will not respond to application. Therefore, it is possible to meet the challenge of the food crisis. But our weakness is above all our lack of the technical, economic and structural capacity to create the conditions for agricultural production and productivity.

I welcome the measures taken in June this year at the World Food Summit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), held in Rome, on the food crisis. The initiative on the upswing in the price of foodstuffs should mainly be based on stimulating food production in our countries. For that, we look forward to implementation of the International Monetary Fund proposal to double its aid to agriculture on the African continent, in the hope of strengthening the productive capacity of our farmers and creating the structural conditions for the production and marketing of agricultural goods.

As part of regional talks on the food crisis, held in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 29 July this year, under the aegis of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), it was agreed to make effective the Maputo Declaration and the Abuja Declaration on, respectively, allocating 10 per cent of our national budget to agriculture and assuring our countries better access to resources for agriculture.

We have also given ECCAS a mandate to, among other actions, accelerate implementation of a common agricultural policy. Relaunching the agricultural sector is one of the priorities of my mandate as President of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). At the Yaoundé summit in June this year we decided to put that concern at the centre of the regional economic programme.

None of these good resolutions can become reality for our farmers unless the support promised to them actually reaches them. Particularly in Central Africa, if these promises are kept they will speed up the putting into place of regional focal points for development that will help to reduce the shortfalls in agricultural activity and the disparities between rural and urban areas.

Food security has become a matter of concern for the world. Hunger continues to be the worst weapon of mass destruction. The social crises seen in many places result from the realization that food insecurity is worsening with the rising cost of living and other uncertainties, such as climate change and natural disasters.

In Central Africa, because of the destructive action of irregular military rebel groups, many manipulated from outside, food insecurity, particularly in rural areas, is often provoked by lack of security. That led the Government to organize, in April this year, a national seminar on reforming the security sector, which was an important step towards peace.

In the light of this, the process of inclusive political dialogue, which I have pledged to carry through to its conclusion, should be seen by all Central Africans as a categorical imperative.

Today, millions of people throughout the world are increasingly losing their means of subsistence because of the impact of food insecurity and of the steep rise in oil prices on the world economy, with unprecedented consequences for world order and peace.

Hunger, the environment, corruption and civil and ethnic conflicts are a burden for the most impoverished peoples on earth.

Other threats, such as terrorism, poverty and misgovernment, also contribute to making the world even more vulnerable, and demand from us responses and methods that will bring about a lasting solution.

In this age of interdependence of States, the prime solution and imperative need seems to be a collective decision-making forum and an instrument for rapid action. That was the vision of the founders of our Organization in 1945.

But we must recognize today that the various institutions that make up the United Nations have their limitations, and we must agree on the need for reform to make the Organization much more effective in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and seek the kind of peace that meets the current situation.

My country is convinced of the importance of genuine democratization of the United Nations system. In that connection, particular attention should be given to the functioning of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the General Assembly. If together we take courageous decisions to implement this ambitious project, we shall give the world an ideal structure that can tackle all international questions. This is an opportunity to build a world that is more secure, more equitable, more balanced and freer for all peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Central African Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. François Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pires (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): First, I congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-third session. I wish him a successful presidency. I also

salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and express my highest regard for his commitment to peace, dialogue and prosperity for all.

The world grows in complexity, with its multiple challenges and numerous risks and uncertainties. This calls for increased multilateralism, more collective responsibility and greater cooperation. In short, it demands and expects more and better from the United Nations.

The world is undergoing a profound and multifaceted crisis in the financial, energy, food and environmental areas. Indeed, we face an environment fraught with uncertainty in the short and long term, underscored by financial instability, foreign exchange volatility, escalating oil and food prices and a globally troubled world economy. There is risk to our economic, human, political and military security — in other words, our general and collective security.

On the one hand, organized transnational crime and terrorism threaten international order and the rule of law. On the other hand, the effects of global warming and climate change, as well as the risks imposed by their worsening, are real facts that confront world leaders and institutions.

World peace remains out of reach. Areas of armed conflict still exist. Indeed, they resurge repeatedly or persist at low intensity. In the meantime, new sources of tension arise in many places. However, I believe we agree that war is not the best way to overcome these challenges.

We also have failed to build security and trust among all and for all, large and small, rich and poor. Without security, without social stability, without political and institutional cohesion, and above all without mutual trust between the international political actors, it is difficult to further the premises that may contribute to ensuring a solution to major global problems, resolving our main challenges, overcoming extreme poverty and the most pervasive endemic diseases, as well as moving past current global social and economic imbalances.

With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals the international community expressly undertook to contribute to overcoming this unsustainable situation. I therefore urge the Assembly to work towards the preservation of an international environment favourable to the achievement of the commitment that we undertook — the social and economic growth of the poorest countries, the eradication of extreme poverty, the consolidation of peace, dialogue and international cooperation towards international balance, the defence of life and the planet's future.

The current financial crisis is underscored by the instability of the financial markets and the volatility in the movement of capital, which put our worldwide economic stability at risk. We must retain the global financial architecture. It seems necessary for us to agree on new forms of financial regulation that are effective, trustworthy and acceptable to all.

The food crisis has placed hundreds of millions of people in a precarious situation. It is clear that urgent action is required to ensure increased agricultural production capable of meeting current and future needs. That requires the promotion of agricultural policies consistent with the demands of the situation, the partnership of the rich and technologically more advanced countries and technical assistance from international organizations; it means that attention must be given to modernizing and increasing agricultural production and productivity in the affected countries and regions. I think specifically of my country and the African continent.

Escalating oil prices have created serious problems for the economies of the least developed and non-producing countries. I ask, why not consider forms of compensation for the poorest and most affected nations in view of the enormous financial surpluses that have been accumulated? Admittedly, such an act of justice and solidarity would not be enough. We must therefore act individually and collectively and continue to promote energy alternatives and energy efficiency, as well as encourage reduced dependence on fossil fuels. Urgent and global measures are required to overcome the serious environmental crisis and to develop innovative and safe options for the future of humanity. That is the challenge that we must take up for the sake of the future and that we must overcome for the benefit of all.

We surely agree that humanity is at a decisive moment in history that clearly runs counter to the paradigms of its recent past — a time when a new world is painfully coming into being.

Recent experiences show that no single nation can in isolation solve the great challenges and global

problems which the world faces. However, our universal institution does present the essential conditions and the required collective responsibility for such an endeavour. Therefore, it is incumbent on the United Nations to shoulder the tremendous mission of promoting more effective world governance.

However, to perform such a role, which is now more complex than ever, the United Nations is called upon to adapt itself to the challenges of the twenty-first century, to express the major shaping forces of the contemporary world and to ensure and convey confidence to all of its Member States. Accordingly, the United Nations system must be reformed and improved and, above all, the representativeness and legitimacy of the Security Council must be urgently expanded and strengthened.

Thirty-five years ago, on 4 September 1973, the Republic of Guinea-Bissau acceded to national sovereignty. I salute the delegation of Guinea-Bissau in this room. It is our firm conviction that our brother nation will be able to overcome all the difficulties currently facing it and to consolidate the foundations of its stability under the rule of law.

Allow me also to welcome the recent legislative elections in Angola and to congratulate the people and authorities of Angola for the responsible and transparent manner in which those important elections were conducted.

I would further like to welcome the political agreements that led to the end of the political crisis in Zimbabwe. That is a testament to the emancipation of our continent and to its aspiration to progress, and thus helps to usher in the new era and the new world that we so eagerly desire.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cape Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pedro Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Topi (*spoke in Albanian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is a special pleasure for me to address the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Allow me to congratulate the Assembly President on his election to his high position. Albania welcomes cooperation with him. I would like to take this opportunity to assure the President of the full support of my country. I would also like to express my highest praise to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his vision and continuous efforts to revitalize and to reform our Organization, the United Nations.

Allow me also to confirm Albania's commitment to a strong and coherent United Nations, capable of successfully tackling the challenges we currently face. We fully support the joint initiatives and actions aimed at strengthening collective peace and security in order to achieve sustainable and long-term development to promote human rights and international cooperation. We consider that reform of the Organization in all its aspects is possible only through cooperation, dialogue and consensus.

The global fight against terrorism, especially through guaranteeing an effective response to this collective threat, demands that the United Nations continue to play a very important role. My country, Albania, has very actively met its responsibilities in the global fight against terrorism. In compliance with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which the General Assembly unanimously passed on 8 September 2006, Albania continues to be a stability factor in the region and beyond through its moderating and constructive policy. It contributes with peacekeeping troops in the framework of the United Nations and other security organizations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It recently deployed 68 troops to Chad as part of the European Union-led peacekeeping force. Albania is also working to enhance its domestic capacities to enable a greater presence in aiding global

peace and security by deepening its cooperation with the United Nations in the field of peacekeeping operations.

Albania has already become part of the United Nations system-wide coherence effort for reform of the Organization by willingly joining the One United Nations initiative. It fully supports this project and is actively working with United Nations agencies to secure new ways of partnership in the fields of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. One United Nations is being carried out in full respect for national sovereignty and national ownership of development and in compliance with the needs and priorities of our country, especially of the integration to the European Union (EU) and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As a pilot country, we are aware of this responsibility, and we will do everything possible to turn this initiative into a tangible success. In my country the MDGs are not viewed simply as development objectives, but also as a means for growth. Albania has nationalized the MDGs by drafting and following step-by-step implementation instructions for the zonal strategies of development. It has also added one more objective: that of good governance. Keeping in mind experiences to date, meeting the MDGs in countries with small and medium incomes demands continuous support from the national leadership, a more efficient use of resources and a closer partnership among all the players — in Governments, the international community and civil society.

We are very active in the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations, and we are convinced that this initiative already presents a political instrument of the United Nations to build peace in the broader meaning of the term. Following up that commitment, Albania has compiled a national strategy of intercultural dialogue, which reflects the centuries-old tradition of full religious harmony and understanding.

Climate change presents a global concern and threat, and as such it affects my country as well. Albania considers it a priority issue and assesses it in the framework of the implementation of the One United Nations initiative. It joins the international community with determination in the challenge of global climate change and modestly contributes to reducing emissions quotas to secure a better and a more developed future.

The world food crisis continues to be one of the most complex challenges faced by humanity. It not only affects the health and survival of millions of people all over the world, but directly threatens political and economic stability by seriously putting into question the achievement of the MDGs. The causes of this crisis are numerous and complex. As such, they demand a multilevel, coherent and well-coordinated response. My country hails the Secretary-General's establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

Albania is undertaking a full programme of institutional, economic and legal reforms through which we aim to transform Albania into a country attractive to foreign investments, with a market open to free enterprise. I have the pleasure to point out that the latest World Bank report listed Albania as second among countries that have implemented successful reforms to facilitate business practices during 2007 and 2008.

Albania has gained the status of a medium-income country, and I believe that this progress must be consolidated in compliance with the new challenges of development. The national strategy for development and integration has determined our vision for the next seven years of Albania as a country of high democratic standards, fully guaranteeing the fundamental human rights, with its sustainable economic and social development aimed at integrating into NATO and the European Union, as well as harmonizing with the MDGs — a country providing a better and safer life to future generations.

Albania enjoys a solid and irreversible relationship with the EU. The Stabilization and Association Agreement serves as our guide, and the primary objective is the conclusion of the ratification agreement by the end of this year. The European countries and the European Commission have invested considerably in Albania. We have responded to this contribution not only with natural gratitude, but also with concrete commitments and with joint and coordinated work programmes in the fields of good governance, institutional functioning and economic growth and in the fight against organized crime and corruption.

Albania's path towards full Euro-Atlantic integration is widely supported by the Albanian public and its political spectrum. In particular, the invitation to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit, the signing of the alliance and the protocols on 8 July 2008 and the ongoing ratification process all mark historic achievements for Albania and are a positive assessment of the new and tangible Albanian reality. Albania will respond to this assessment with greater responsibility and determination in the face of the obligation that stems from full-fledged membership in the alliance, which will serve peace and security not only in the Balkans, but in the Mediterranean region and beyond.

Albania pays particular attention to the strengthening of multilateral regional relations. It seriously encourages the process of regional cooperation by being an active partner in all of the initiatives undertaken in South-East Europe. That engagement serves to promote good neighbourliness, strengthening security, building trust among the regional countries, stability and full integration of all the countries in the region in the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Challenges such as the fight against terrorism, organized crime, arms proliferation and border management have an interlinked character that can be overcome only through joint actions, initiatives and commitment. We will continue to play the same constructive role for our benefit and for that of the whole region.

Albania considers the foundation of the independent and sovereign State of Kosovo as the most important historical event and development of our region at the beginning of this century. An independent and democratic Kosovo, oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration, is the just and most sustainable solution. It is an example of the most successful investment made by the international community towards the implementation of the rule of law, to long-term stability and peace and development in the Balkans and beyond.

The independence of Kosovo finally frees that part of Europe from the nightmare of war, of inter-ethnic conflicts and of ethnic cleansing and genocide. It fulfils and respects the free will of the people to break free from political oppression, historical injustices and the inability to develop. Kosovo is no longer being led by the failed Yugoslavia, nor by the new moderate Yugoslavs. It is being led by the principles of a civilized Europe and those of the universalized United Nations.

Albania encourages the people and the Government of Kosovo in their commitment to build a democratic and multi-ethnic society in which, regardless of ethnic considerations, its every citizen will feel like a free man in his home and on his property. The new constitution of Kosovo and the Ahtisaari package meet the highest standards of human rights and offer widespread protection to all the communities living in Kosovo, especially to the Serbs of Kosovo.

We are convinced that, following the guidelines of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, all necessary actions will be taken as soon as possible: the United Nations presence will be reconfigured and the European Union Rule of Law Mission Kosovo — EULEX — will be spread over the entire territory of Kosovo, thus avoiding any vacuum of power and imposition of competences on top of each other and preventing any possible regressive attempt, regardless of where it may have originated, against this Euro-Atlantic process.

Albania deems as unfounded the efforts to draw parallels between Kosovo and the regions of Georgia — Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Numerous historical, judicial, constitutional, political and demographic arguments demonstrate that Kosovo is a unique case — a sui generis case — and the solution implemented is unique as well. As such, it does not and cannot serve as a model to solve other conflicts either in the region or beyond it. Any political, economic, military or diplomatic endeavour against the consolidation or soundness of the State of Kosovo would be a hopeless attempt against its process of integration to NATO and the EU, a regressive move against the investments and progress that we so direly need, and it could not be sold as valuable to the European Union. Historical dreams must not darken the vision of the future.

Albania is convinced that the recognition of the new State of Kosovo is in the interests of Kosovo, Albania, Serbia and of all its close and distant neighbours. It is in the interest of the European and Mediterranean region. That is why Kosovo — this new political, economical and social reality — fully deserves to be a Member of our United Nations as soon as possible. I call upon the Assembly to admit with

realism this irreversible development by recognizing and supporting, without any reserve, the Republic of Kosovo.

Albania continues to remain committed to cooperating with and enriching and fulfilling the United Nations ideals by fully believing in the active role of the international community as it faces the present global challenges. In order to fulfil this mission, we must all together give our support and readiness to this Organization, which embodies not only universal values, but also the aspirations of humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement just made.

Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President returned to the Chair.

Address by Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Arias Sánchez (*spoke in Spanish*): I received the news of your election to the General Assembly presidency, Sir, with a brother's pride. Twenty-one years ago, it was through war in Central America that we became acquainted. Today it is peace that allows us to meet once more. In the name of the people of Costa Rica, and in my own name as well, I am honoured to extend to you a brotherly Central American greeting.

I have come here to speak words of the urgency that any leader feels at decisive moments in history. This is not just any year. While we hold this General Assembly, millions of people who used to be able to meet their most basic needs have seen the face of poverty once again. Hunger, that abominable monster that we had escaped for so many years, has returned to chase away the dreams of humanity. Pessimism and hopelessness have taken control of our economies, and, as always, the poorest among us will pay the consequences. World military spending has reached $3.3 billion per day, but international aid continues to reach the poorest countries at a snail's pace and fails to reach middle-income countries altogether. Brutal hurricanes and intense droughts remind us that this planet reacts to our irrationality, and the time that remains for us may be a countdown to disaster if we do not make a change.

It may be that in no other General Assembly have issues more global than now been discussed. Our interdependence has made us all vulnerable, but in that interdependence also lies our strength. In the past, a nation could avert its gaze from distant suffering and scorn the pain of others. Today, that option does not exist. Every victory and every failure is shared.

The man who, motivated by hunger, cuts down a tree in the virgin Amazon rainforest unwittingly deprives us of a fraction of the air we breathe in this room. The European mother who is forced to buy less food because she cannot afford the costs unwittingly affects the economy of all nations in the world. The African child who drops out of school because of a lack of resources unwittingly determines the future performance of our species. We are all united in that, and perhaps for the first time in history, no one can look in another direction. We are seated simultaneously at the prosecutor's bench and at the defence table, in the public gallery and in the judge's chair.

We must take advantage of this moment when equality among nations is seen in the equality of our challenges. We will not be able to face our realities unless we understand them completely. We will not be able to shine the light of reason upon our Earth if we intentionally leave some regions in the dark. If we are seriously to take up the challenges of our time it is right that like that old protagonist of the Charles Dickens tale, we open our eyes to our past, our present and our future; we must guarantee peace and justice for the past, peace and development for the present, peace and nature for the future.

In the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, the States that make up this Organization undertook to establish conditions under which justice can be

maintained. Of those conditions, perhaps the most important is will: the will to demand that our obligations are fulfilled; the will to speak out when international law is violated; and, above all, the will to ensure that acts that are an affront to all humankind do not go unnoticed.

Evil springs not only from action but also and, above all, from omission. To keep silent when crimes are grave and responsibilities are clear is not to remain neutral but is to side with the aggressors. Our recent past is marked by horrendous, unpunished crimes that call out, not for vengeance, but for justice. We cannot accept that evil is banal. If we do not want to repeat the painful history of Kosovo and Bosnia, of Rwanda and Kampuchea, then it is time for the international community to demand that those responsible for the crimes committed in Darfur be judged before the international criminal court. Costa Rica will oppose any attempt to avoid such a path, which is the path of peace. Forgiveness is based on memory, not on dissimulation; and peace will be possible only through memory. We must understand, in the words of Elie Wiesel, "that the memory of evil will serve as a shield against evil; that the memory of death will serve as a shield against death".

If the spirit of the past calls on us to hold people responsible for the violation of human rights, the spirit of the present calls on us to ensure that those rights are fulfilled today. Governments can indirectly hurt their peoples in many ways, one of which is excessive military spending. In developing nations, in particular, every long-range missile, every helicopter gunship and every tank is a symbol of the deferred needs of our people. On a planet where one sixth of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, spending $1.2 trillion on arms and soldiers is an offence and a symbol of irrationality because the security of a satisfied world is more certain than the security of an armed world. Latin America is not immune to this phenomenon. Last year Latin American military spending reached $39 billion, in a region that has never been more peaceful or more democratic.

I know of no greater perversion of values and no greater misplacement of priorities. With a small percentage of world military spending we could give drinking water to all of humanity, equip all homes with electricity, achieve universal literacy, and eradicate all preventable diseases. I am not talking about the utopia of a world without armies. Unfortunately, that is an idea whose time has not yet come. I am talking about tiny percentages of an expenditure that could be reduced without harming the ability of countries to defend themselves — particularly developing countries. That is why my Government has presented the Costa Rica consensus, an initiative that would establish mechanisms to forgive debts and use international financial resources to support developing nations that spend more and more on environmental protection, education, health care and housing for their people and less and less on arms and soldiers. I am convinced that that will bring us greater development, greater security and greater peace than all the money that we have now set aside for our armies. I humbly ask members today to support this initiative.

I also ask for members' support for the arms trade treaty that Costa Rica is advocating within this Organization, to prohibit the transfer of arms to States, groups or individuals if there is sufficient reason to believe that those arms will be used to violate human rights or international law, or to interfere with sustainable development. The destructive power of the world's existing 640 million small arms and light weapons, most in the hands of civilians, deserves the same attention or even more attention than military spending.

However, no matter how urgent it may be to ensure the present development of our peoples, it is equally important to ensure their future development. The spirit of the future, as we look ahead to it, offers us a desolate image. Imagine an unending desert, a cracked ground too hot to stand on. Imagine a planet where life has been displaced and only cockroaches, if anything, can survive. Imagine a world whose range of colours, which until now has been endless, is reduced to grays and dark browns. Imagine polluted air, impossible to breathe. "This is not a poor copy of John's delirium during his exile on Patmos" as Gabriel Garcia Márquez once said. I am not describing the Apocalypse but simply the world that awaits us if we do not take action right away to declare "peace with nature".

Sixty years ago an illustrious Costa Rican, a visionary and brave man, José Figueres Ferrer, abolished my country's army. What had been the general headquarters of the Costa Rican armed forces is today our main national museum. Our children have never seen a column of soldiers on the march; they know only the march of columns of ants. No Costa

Rican children know the difference between this or that missile, or this or that combat plane, but they can distinguish among the trees of the forest and the animals of the sea; they know the importance of the water cycle, of wind energy, of rivers and of sun. Ours is a nation of peace among humans, but we also aspire to be a nation of peace with all forms of life.

We have set a goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2021. Last year we became the world leader for the number of trees per capita and square kilometre, planting 5 million trees. In 2008 we will plant 7 million more. We are leading an international crusade against global warming and environmental destruction, with a special focus on the planet's primary forests. Today, Assembly members, I ask you to join us.

The march of humanity through history is neither linear nor continuous. It is marked by detours and pitfalls, and even by painful setbacks. As in Pedro Calderón de la Barcá's play *La Vida es Sueña*, one morning we awake as princes and the next we are no more than beggars. But not everything in life is a dream. There are concrete realities that we have been able to build. There are indisputable achievements in the history of humankind. This Organization is one of them. Members may tell me that the United Nations is founded on the search for peace, understanding among peoples and respect for international law. That is all true. But I dare to say that more than anything else this Organization is founded on hope, the hope that our march is upward, that our future will be better, and that a promised land lies behind the deserts of violence and injustice that, with courage, we have been able to cross.

I assure this Assembly that if we confront the spirit of our past, of our present and of our future, if we build peace on a base of justice, development and nature, and if we turn away from forgetfulness, arms and environmental destruction we will reach that promised land some day and our children and our children's children will never again be beggars in the kingdom of their dreams.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by His Excellency Mr. Bayar Sanj, Prime Minister of Mongolia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Mongolia.

Mr. Bayar Sanj, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Bayar Sanj, Prime Minister of Mongolia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sanj (Mongolia): This session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the international community is faced with formidable challenges and threats of a much more complex nature. Global problems ranging from poverty, violence, inequality and disparity, terrorism, natural disasters and other acute problems have been further impeded by the current global financial, food and energy crisis. As we live in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world the solutions demand our concerted action.

The main theme of this session, namely, the impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world, is most timely. Steep increases in staple food prices lead to a global food crisis. Today millions of vulnerable people in poor countries who were probably making ends meet, face even greater challenges. It is a tragic setback that more than 75 million additional people have been driven into hunger and poverty because of the food crisis. The economic challenges posed by soaring food prices are daunting. They take a toll on inflation rates, breed economic protectionism, and further impede economic development for developing nations. Those countries also had to cope with consequent macroeconomic implications concerning the nexus between food price increases and the overall inflation rate.

The Government of Mongolia, having recognized the urgent need to address the food crisis, took the necessary actions at both policy and practical levels to reduce its severe impact on the vulnerable strata of its population. My Government has designated this year as the year for food supply and safety and aims to achieve three main objectives: promoting food production to reduce the country's dependence on imported goods;

raising public awareness about food quality, and ensuring safe food production and processing in the country.

In pursuit of the first objective I launched at the beginning of this year the third national crop rehabilitation drive, or campaign to reclaim virgin lands, to revive domestic agricultural production. As a result of that nationwide campaign Mongolia is expected to ensure self-sufficiency in major staple food products by 2010.

Countries throughout the world find themselves intimately affected by oil price hikes. In our case the situation is aggravated by the fact that the surge in imported petroleum prices tends to be followed by overall price increases. Coal remains the primary energy source used for electricity and heating in many countries. The use of inefficient coal-burning technology causes air pollution, impacting negatively on the population's health and the environment. Therefore, research, development and deployment of clean coal technology are indeed top energy priorities for coal-producing countries such as Mongolia.

The most effective way to mitigate these factors is to improve energy efficiency and pursue energy diversification. In this regard, Mongolia commends the efforts of Member States and international organizations in research and development and the deployment and transfer of innovative energy technologies such as renewable sources, cleaner and lower carbon technologies and nuclear power. These efforts are crucial as we seek to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Ensuring energy security is a challenge that requires a comprehensive solution both nationally and internationally. No country in the world is endowed with or has developed all possible energy sources, so every country has a vested interest in energy cooperation and has something to contribute to it.

Mongolia gives special priority to energy cooperation in our region. An institutional foundation for such cooperation has already been laid with regular sessions of the Senior Officials Committee on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia. The first session of the Committee, hosted by the Mongolian Government in November 2005, established the Intergovernmental Collaborative Mechanism on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia.

The Tavan Tolgoi, Mongolia's huge coal coking project has an important role to play in such subregional cooperation. Such subregional cooperation in the energy sector, combined with ongoing efforts to spur the implementation of the Greater Tumen River Initiative, could be conducive to furthering the prospect for economic integration in North-East Asia, one of the most dynamic and diverse regions of the world.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, we have passed the midpoint in our efforts to implement them. Progress on MDG implementation around the globe reveals a sharply contrasting picture. Some countries find themselves in more advanced stages of achievement, while others are still lagging far behind on all or many important Goals. Thus, there is an urgent need to foster an effective global cooperation aimed at assisting off-track countries in their efforts to reach the relevant targets by 2015. In this regard, my delegation looks forward to tomorrow's high-level discussion to come up with bold and specific commitments to action.

With rich deposits of coal, copper, gold, molybdenum and uranium, most of them still largely untapped, Mongolia indeed has an unprecedented opportunity to embark upon the path of rapid economic growth and sustainable development — if we are able to overcome the partisan divisions which have in our recent past all too often obstructed our onward movement. It is with this in mind that the two main political parties, in an unprecedented move, set aside their long-standing differences and formed a unity Government only a few days ago, following the fifth democratic general elections, of 29 June.

The result of the elections, concluded to have been free and fair by more than 80 observers from more than 20 countries, gave an undeniable majority to my party, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), with 45 out of the total of 76 seats in parliament. However, in the face of the pressing need to forge a national consensus on major development issues, the MPRP has decided voluntarily to give away its right to unilaterally form its own Government and has concluded an agreement with the Mongolian Democratic Party. Our two parties' historic decision to work hand in hand is testimony to our commitment to the well-being and prosperity of the people of Mongolia.

I call it the fourth historic choice of my people over the last 100 years, following the declaration of independence in 1911, the abolition of feudalism in 1921-1924 and the embrace of democracy in 1990. I am most confident that this unity will greatly contribute to pulling our efforts together to collectively succeed in achieving the MDGs by 2015 and our MDG-based comprehensive national development strategy by 2021, thus substantially improving the living standards of our people and upgrading Mongolia to a middle-income country.

In our globalized world, no nation can achieve its goals all on its own. That includes Mongolia. Constructive engagement in world affairs through multilateral cooperation mechanisms, with the United Nations at the centre, and deeper integration into the world economy will thus continue to be the cornerstone of Mongolia's foreign policy. I understand all too well that the existence of a stable, peaceful and prosperous world is a condition for the fulfilment of my Government's — or any other Government's — promise to its people.

With this in mind, I wish to reaffirm Mongolia's strong resolve to continue its active engagement in the work of the United Nations and other multilateral organizations and processes, and our commitment to the world Organization as a central coordinating instrument of the common efforts of the family of nations to address the complex challenges of our times.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bayar Sanj, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 8.40 p.m.